



PHOTOGRAPHY: TARA MCMULLEN

GRAMOPHONE SOUNDS OF AMERICA

RECORDINGS & EVENTS A special eight-page section for readers in the US and Canada

GRAMOPHONE talks to...

Jon Kimura Parker

The Canadian pianist on his virtuoso solo recording, 'Fantasy'

What's your definition of a fantasy?

It's a combination of things. The word is used by composers to say 'I'm not writing a sonata' - there aren't those structural expectations.

But, especially with Schumann, it's the idea of the world of imagination and fairy-tales.

And then there's the way Liszt wrote his opera fantasies, where he took several themes from an opera and created a virtuoso display to show off the pianist. I wanted to portray as many different kinds of fantasy on this recording as possible.

Is there a danger that this sort of music can be mistaken for mere technical frippery?

I've always been embarrassed by music that's flash for its own sake. The piece on this recording that represents the biggest effort to give it some musical content is the Schubert Wandererfantasie. When I learnt it at 15 I had a brilliant young person's technique but no understanding of a Ländler or a waltz, or what was stylistically Austrian – it was just fun to play. But, coming back to it now, there's so much music there. Yes, it happens to be Schubert's mostly blatantly virtuosic piece but there's so much music underneath.

Does your technique have to be even more polished in order to find the music within it?

As I tell my students, you can easily make musical decisions to accommodate a

technical issue but what you want is for your technique to accommodate your musical wishes. That only happens when you're really comfortable, technically. The years of playing the Schubert as a glorified étude helped me, because it got it out of my system – now I'm able to relax into it and let the music speak.

You've included a Wizard of Oz Fantasy...

William Hirtz's original version was for piano duet and it was at my behest that he arranged it for solo piano. He didn't leave anything out, so it's insanely difficult - it's the hardest piece, technically, on the whole recording. But it should sound effortless!

It's an unusual choice among pieces by Schubert, Mozart, Schumann and an arrangement of Cavalleria rusticana...

I've always been uncomfortable with the expectation that musicians should be specialists and not acknowledge other types of music. In concert, I've been playing jazz encores after Beethoven concertos for years – every once in a while it upsets someone, but that's me. I've started touring with Stewart Copeland from The Police and we've been taking music by classical composers and then coming up with something different. I love the opportunity to do that and I think that having a wide variety of interests makes me play Mozart better.



You composed your own cadenza for the Mozart Fantasy in D minor...

Back in 1990, I was touring the Mozart Concerto in D minor, K466, with the St Paul Chamber Orchestra and Christopher Hogwood.

Hogwood called me a month before the tour and said, 'I do hope you'll play your own cadenza'. I panicked and started researching very carefully before writing one. For the Fantasy, though, it just came to me. Of course I want it to be stylistically appropriate but I'm not worried about whether it's 'correct' or not.

It's been a while since you recorded...

I went 25 years without making any recordings at all – I wasn't comfortable in that high-pressure environment. But recently I played on Orli Shaham's 'American Grace' album and it was so much fun. And now I've realised that, if I can record what I want to record, at my own pace and on my own terms, I'm really comfortable recording again.

Chausson · Ravel

Chausson Piano Trio, Op 3 Ravel Piano Trio Trio Solisti

Bridge (F) BRIDGE9440 (57' • DDD)



Two French trios – one a classic, the other rarely played. But Ravel's beloved

Trio in A minor doesn't eclipse Chausson's Trio in G minor on this splendid disc by Trio Solisti. If anything, the juxtaposition reveals the unjust neglect of the Chausson, whose thematic allure and rich harmonic colours are merged with exceptional sensitivity to balance.

Chausson was a young composer when he wrote the Trio, which has roots in cyclic structure gleaned from his studies with Franck. While the piece takes some inspiration from his teacher, it also claims a fervent and often wistful personality that points the way to later Chausson creations. The four movements are traditional in form, yet everything is fresh and deeply felt, especially the poignant slow movement.

Trio Solisti bring cohesiveness and unpressured beauty of sound to Chausson's Trio. The musicians – violinist Maria Bachmann, cellist Alexis Pia Gerlach and pianist Adam Neiman – interact with

gramophone.co.uk GRAMOPHONE MARCH 2015 I



James Ehnes Andrew Russo Syracuse Symphony Orchestra David Alan Miller

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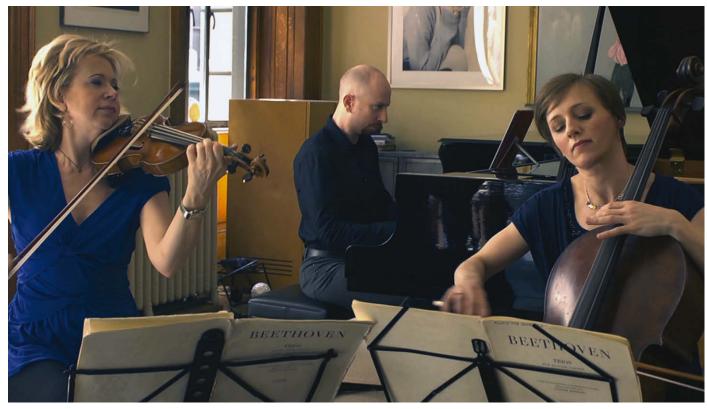






JAMES EHNES





Idiomatic and sophisticated: Trio Solisti get the French stylistics right on their new recording of music by Ravel and Chausson

collegial vibrancy, emphasising the shifts in rhythm and the glowing arc of phrases. Neiman seizes the opportunity to clarify and propel the intricate keyboard demands in the finale.

Ravel's Trio, written more than three decades after the Chausson, exists in a special world of its own, a fact Trio Solisti underline in a performance of kaleidoscopic hues. The score's myriad effects sound organic, rather than applied, and the musicians solve Ravel's metrical puzzles with bountiful panache. Whether silken or sweeping, the music receives idiomatic and sophisticated treatment as shaped by these keenly perceptive artists. Donald Rosenberg

Current

Airline Icarus	
Carla Huhtanen sop	Ad Exec
Krisztina Szabó mez	Flight Attendant
Graham Thomson ten	Scholar
Alexander Dobson bar	Worker/Pilot
Geoffrey Sirett bar	Business Man
ensemble / Brian Current	

Naxos Canadian Classics ® 8 660356 (44' • DDD)



The release of Airline Icarus, a chamber opera by composer Brian Current and librettist

Anton Piatigorsky about the intersecting thoughts of passengers aboard a commercial airplane bound for Cleveland, may attract interest simply on the wings of current events. Save for a terrifying 30 seconds at the end, however, the story is more about the Icarus myth, particularly the issue of hubris, and the forced intimacy of strangers than the disappearance of airliners.

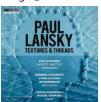
Suggested by the downing of a Korean jet which went down in 1983 over the Soviet Union's east coast, Airline Icarus ingeniously merges mechanism, minimalism, white noise and vocalism amid a dizzying cocktail of arias and ensemble pieces whose influences include Broadway shows and Offenbach musicals. And while it's not entirely clear whether the opera's real heart lies in the exalted fears of the Scholar, eloquently sung by Graham Thomson, on his way to deliver a paper on 'the tragic death of Icarus', or in proposing ethereal consolation for the dead, the very act of assigning such a large subject and event to the forces of a chamber opera has a hubris of its own which makes the experience seem more theatrical, at times even ritualistic, than real.

Airline Icarus was commissioned in 2001 by Opera Breve Vancouver and went through years of development before being awarded the Italian Premio Fedora Award in 2011 by a jury chaired by Louis Andriessen; it received its staged premiere in Verbania

and was presented in concert at the Royal Conservatory in Toronto, the rehearsals of which formed the basis of the this recording. Laurence Vittes

Lansky

Textures^a. Threads^b ^aHammer/Klavier; ^bTime Travellers Bridge (F) BRIDGE9435 (58' • DDD)



No need to beat around any bushes here: this is a mesmerising release that invites repeated

listening. Both works by Paul Lansky, Textures and Threads, make beguiling use of percussion instruments, including two pianos in the former without apology to Bartók's classic piece for similar instrumentation. Lansky spent most of his career writing computer music before venturing into acoustical territory. His vast experience exploring the nuances of electronic sonorities can be discerned in these scores.

There are moments in *Textures* (2012-13) when you think you've walked into an enchanted clockmaker's shop. Throughout the eight movements, the pianos and percussion tick and tock, chime away and engage in all sorts of brightly mechanical rhythmic activity. The atmospheres are



ROBERT MORAN > GAME OF THE ANTICHRIST

JEFFREY ZEIGLER > SOMETHING OF LIFE
PRISM > HERITAGE / EVOLUTION, VOL.1
DAN ROMAN > MUSICA DE PALLADIUM
PAT O'KEEFE > CONTENTS MAY DIFFER
ANNE LEBARON > CRESCENT CITY
CLOCKED OUT > TIME CRYSTALS
JUSTIN MERRITT > BLENDER

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Conductors

Sylvain Cambreling

- Music Director: Staatsoper Stuttgart
- Principal Conductor: Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra
- Principal Guest Conductor: Klangforum Wien

Alpesh Chauhan

 Assistant Conductor: City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

Michael Collins

 Principal Conductor: City of London Sinfonia

Andreas Delfs

 Conductor Laureate: Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra

Matthew Halls

Artistic Director: Oregon Bach Festival

Christian Kluxen

 Dudamel Fellow: Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra

Stephen Layton

- Artistic Director and Principal Conductor: City of London Sinfonia
- Director: Polyphony
- Director of Music: Trinity College, Cambridge
- · Artistic Director: Holst Singers

Andrew Litton

- Music Director: Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra
- Music Director: Colorado Symphony
- Artistic Director: Minnesota Orchestra
 "Sommerfest"
- Conductor Laureate: Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Grant Llewellyn

 Music Director: North Carolina Symphony

Fergus Macleod

 Sir Charles Mackerras Fellow: English National Opera

Ville Matvejeff

- Chief Conductor: Jyväskylä Sinfonia
- Founder and Artistic Director: New Generation Opera

Lionel Meunier

Artistic Director: Vox Luminis

Alexander Mickelthwate

 Music Director: Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

Christopher Moulds

Olli Mustonen

Founder and Artistic Director: Helsinki
Festival Orchestra

Daniel Raiskin

- Chief Conductor: "Artur Rubinstein" Philharmonic Orchestra
- Chief Conductor: Staatsorchester Rheinische Philharmonie

Clark Rundell

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Tatsuya Shimono

 Principal Guest Conductor: Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra

Yasuo Shinozaki

 Music Advisor and Chief Conductor designate: Shizuoka Symphony Orchestra

Frank Strobel

 Artistic Director: European FilmPhilharmonic Institute, Berlin

Masaaki Suzuki

• Founder and Music Director: Bach Collegium Japan

Maxime Tortelier

Martin Yates

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illuminated through deft deployment of colours and techniques, with bountiful variety to keep the ears awaiting the next glistening episode.

Lansky casts the 10 movements in *Threads* (2005) to emphasise specific expressive and sonic possibilities of percussion instruments, from lyrical (aria) and declamatory (recitative) to clamorous (chorus). The struck, strummed, sustained and brushed effects are juxtaposed with masterful sense of pacing and mood. Dashes of world-music rhythms and motoric figures keep the narratives in propulsive motion.

Two ensembles, Hammer/Klavier and Time Travellers, take up the challenges of animating Lansky's scores, and they do so with captivating subtlety and power. Svet Stoyanov and Gwendolyn Burgett are the percussionists in *Textures*, in which they weave lines seamlessly with pianists Thomas Rosenkranz and Michael Sheppard. Stoyanov and Burgett join forces in *Threads* with expert colleagues Ian Rosenbaum and Ayano Kataoka.

Donald Rosenberg

'Beyond Shadows'

Chang Beyond Shadows Cherney Twenty-Two Arguments for the Suspension of Disbelief Harman Doubling Mellits Eleven Pieces for Flute and Piano

The Nu:BC Collective
Red Shift © TK432 (60' • DDD)



Built around flautist Paolo Bortolussi, cellist Eric Wilson and pianist Corey Hamm, The

Nu:BC Collective put a cool, hip face on classical music in Vancouver. Their name is a play on the acronym for the University of British Columbia, where they are in residence, and where this CD of varied, highly entertaining music was recorded.

The concert is dominated by Brian Cherney's Twenty-Two Arguments for the Suspension of Dishelief, based on the Capriccio for solo cello he wrote in 2010 for Matt Haimovitz; launched by a crunchy cello chord and fuelled by the gritty, chaotic response, the piece's richly absorbing 23 minutes of beguiling, fragmented sounds take on an attractive semblance of cohesion unified by the relentlessly virtuoso cello part, in which Eric Wilson turns in an astonishing tour de force performance.

Adding clarinettist Cris Inguanti to the Nu:BC mix, Chris Paul Harman's mesmerising *Doubling* would be a great competition piece. Based in part on a device in the third movement of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, Harman creates a series of fascinating sonic environments in which thrilling, at times almost unbearable tensions develop as the doublings and accompanying pulsings start to decay and drift apart.

Dorothy Chang's *Beyond Shadows* adds percussionist Brian Nesselroad to produce a tool chest of interesting sounds, from *tutti* outbursts to crystalline beauty and a poignant farewell on a solitary piano. Marc Mellits's *Eleven Pieces* for flute and piano features happy pipings, manic spurts and sweet, lyrical cooing; each is diverting in itself, and overall makes a most engaging impression. Laurence Vittes

'Fantasy'

Di Liberto Fantasia sulla Cavalleria rusticana **Hirtz** Wizard of Oz Fantasy **Mozart** Fantasia, K397 **Schubert** Wandererfantasie, D760 **Schumann** Fantasie, Op 17

Jon Kimura Parker pf

Jon Kimura Parker (F) FP0908 (75' • DDD)



Resisting the temptation to make Schubert's *Wandererfantasie* sound

like the piano reduction of an orchestral score, Jon Kimura Parker subtly highlights the music's numerous small touches, like the echo of the Erlkönig's fluttering towards the end of the Adagio, or his reflective take on the Presto's central section, making even more telling the brief emotional confusion he experiences in its wake, to underline its native pianistic nature. Parker's performance of Schumann's Fantasie is Romanticism in even fuller bloom, combining an organic use of rhetorical freedom with lithe energy and the rich, lyrical beauty of a Hamburg Steinway, opening with Prospero-like serenity, then using magical transitional phrasing to make space for each new episode. It is as if Parker's idea of Romanticism were that personal responses, spontaneous as much as possible within the underlying structure, be part of the narrative form and influence its shape and flow.

Parker includes a wonderful novelty in the form of Mozart's unfinished Fantasia in D minor, K397, for which he has supplied his own 90-second completion; it sounds added-on at first but turns out engaging and appropriate, with imaginative twists and turns. Sicilian pianist Calogero Di Liberto wrote his *Fantasia sulla Cavalleria rusticana*

while he was completing his doctoral studies in Parker's piano studio in Houston; it is a fine neo-retro addition to the repertoire which Parker thoroughly enjoys, as he also does William Hirtz's gloriously Technicolor, rather serious *Wizard of Oz* Fantasy, originally a piano duet for Karen Kushner and Igor Kipnis, and reduced by the composer for one pianist. Laurence Vittes

'Transformation'

Beethoven Violin Sonata No 5, 'Spring', Op 24
Ravel Le tombeau de Couperin
Schumann Dichterliebe, Op 48^a

^aBrett Polegato bar The Gallery Players of Niagara
Gallery Players of Niagara (F) GPN14002 (71' • DDD)



Musicians not originally cast in a masterpiece often ache to play that work, which is

where transcribers come in. The art of transferring a score to another instrumental or vocal context is the impetus behind 'Transformation', a disc featuring The Gallery Players of Niagara performing beloved works by Beethoven, Ravel and Schumann painted in new colours. Such practices can make you pine for the original, but not here: the arrangements are so true to the sources, while providing fresh perspectives, that they seize attention.

Patrick Jordan's adaptation of Beethoven's *Spring* Sonata retains the violin but gives many of the solo lines to flute, with viola and cello playing much of the piano's original material. The effect is more soft-edged than the original, partly since these instruments sustain in ways the piano can't. It's full of charm and delicacy, especially as shaped so gracefully by the Niagara musicians, including Jordan on viola.

For his transcription of Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin*, Trevor Wagler studied both the original solo piano version and the composer's orchestration. Titbits of both can be heard in the new guise, such as the oboe solo at the start and sonorities elsewhere that sound strikingly like what (you think) you've heard before. Along with the oboe, the ensemble includes clarinet, violin, cello and piano.

Schumann's *Dichterliebe* receives a palette of new hues in Jordan's arrangement, which replaces the piano with string quartet, double bass and, most subtly, guitar. The baritone part is unchanged, and Brett Polegato invests the texts with tonal beauty and eloquence in collaboration with his expressive colleagues.

Donald Rosenberg

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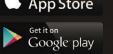
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THE SCENE

L'Arpeggiata and Fretwork perform at Carnegie Hall's month-long festival of music 'Before Bach'; Alisa Weilerstein and Inon Barnatan go on tour; Gustavo Dudamel oversees a Ravel theme in LA

NATIONAL TOUR

Inon Barnatan and Alisa Weilerstein

Works for cello and piano (April 16 - May 1)

When they last toured together as a duo, pianist Inon Barnatan and cellist Alisa Weilerstein earned praise for the spontaneity of their performances. On this national tour, they perform works by Bach, Prokofiev, and Schubert, alongside some premieres. There are scheduled stops in Winston-Salem, NC (April 16), San Juan, PR (April 18), Sonoma, CA (April 26), Santa Barbara, CA (April 27), and Boston, MA (May 1).

inonbarnatan.com; alisaweilerstein.com

HOUSTON

Houston Grand Opera

Die Walküre (April 18 - May 3) Sweeney Todd (April 24 - May 9)

Two significant productions round out the season at Houston Grand Opera. Firstly, HGO continues its Wagner cycle with Die Walküre, a visually stunning production by Carlus Padrissa and the Catalan company La Fura dels Baus. HGO's Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers conducts this monumental work, which stars lain Paterson (Wotan), Christine Goerke (Brünnhilde), Karita Matilla (Sieglinde) and Simon O'Neill (Siegmund). Secondly, there's a presentation of Stephen Sondheim's Victorian noir masterpiece, Sweeney Todd, which stars Nathan Gunn in the title-role, with Susan Bullock as Mrs Lovett and Nicholas Phan as Tobias Rago.

houstongrandopera.org

NORFOLK, VA

Virginia Arts Festival

Bartók: Duke Bluebeard's Castle (April 18 & 19)

Béla Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* is a dark and disturbing one-act opera featuring two voices - Bluebeard and his new wife, Judith, who is afforded a tour of the seven locked rooms in his castle. Behind each door, a dreadful secret is revealed. This psychological fairytale is given new visual enhancement by the world-renowned glass sculptor Dale Chihuly, whose twisted and beautiful glass sculptures offer a shimmering enhancement to Bartók's music. Soprano Rebecca Nash and baritone Charles Robert Austin star in this production, here performed by the Virginia SO, led by JoAnn Falletta.

vafest.org



NEW YORK, NY

Carnegie Hall

Before Bach (April 7 - May 1)

Carnegie Hall celebrates music written before 1685 – the birth year of both JS Bach and Handel – with 13 concerts by some of the

world's best early music performers. Christine Pluhar's L'Arpeggiata perform vocal selections by Purcell and Cavalli, while Fretwork focus on Purcell, Gibbons and Byrd. In another concert. Sir John Eliot Gardiner and his Monteverdi Choir join the English Baroque Soloists to perform Monteverdi's Vespers; the same group present a concert performance of Monteverdi's L'Orfeo the next day. Other highlights include the Canadian ensembles Les Violins du Roy and La Chapelle

de Québec performing excerpts from Purcell's Dido and Aeneas, with soprano Dorothea Röschmann as Dido. Meanwhile, Jordi Savall performs a solo recital and leads a programme of selections from the French Baroque period. **carnegiehall.org**

LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles Philharmonic

Dudamel conducts Ravel (May 14-17)

The LA Philharmonic presents a lavish night focused on Ravel, which includes the orchestral transcription of *Le tombeau de Couperin* – a suite dedicated to the composer's friends who died during the First World War. This is followed by the Concerto for the Left Hand, which was written for the Austrian pianist Paul Wittgenstein – who lost his right arm in the war. The soloist is Jean-Yves Thibaudet. In the midst of this, there's *True Fire*, a world premiere (and LA Phil commission) by Kaija Saariaho for baritone (Gerald Finley) and orchestra. The concert ends with Ravel's greatest hit, *Boléro*. **laphil.com**

INDIANAPOLIS, IN

Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra Stravinsky's The Soldier's Tale — Vonnegut style (May 15 & 16)

In 1993, the New York Philomusica Chamber Ensemble commissioned Kurt Vonnegut to write a new libretto to Stravinsky's classic *The Soldier's tale*. Based on the true story of Eddie D Slovik, a draftee during World War II who became the last American soldier to be executed for desertion, Vonnegut's text

deploys his black humour with satirical commentary on the folly of war. The marriage of these words with Stravinsky's edgy, folk-inflected score results in a musically provocative experience. The Associate Director of the Philadelphia Orchestra, Cristian Macelaru, leads the Indianapolis Symphony in this programme, which also features Salieri's Sinfonia in D, and Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz* No 1.

indianapolissymphony.org

NEW YORK, NY

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center Spanish Dances (May 15):

Emerson String Quartet (May 17 & 19)

The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center closes its season with some inspired programming. On May 15, a diverse group of musicians — including pianist Alessio Bax, violinist Benjamin Beilman and guitarist Jason Vieux — offer works inspired by Spanish rhythms. Two days later, the Emerson String Quartet and CMS Artists perform a Mozart Quintet, a New York premiere by Lowell Liebermann, and Tchaikovsky's string sextet, Souvenir de Florence.

chambermusicsociety.org

Previews by Damian Fowler

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Naming an airport after Sibelius is no bad thing

ccording to reports, a campaign is underway to have Helsinki Airport renamed after the country's most famous composer, Sibelius, to mark his 150th anniversary. The idea is not without precedence. Poland offers travellers the Warsaw Chopin Airport, while you can fly in and out of the Czech Republic from the Ostrava Leoš Janáček Airport, or from Italy via Parma's Giuseppe Verdi Airport. And, for that matter, from New Orleans through an airport named after Louis Armstrong, or from Liverpool through the John Lennon Airport. These are of course just a fraction of the people whose names are destined to be forever entwined in the traveller's mind with early starts, snaking security queues and duty-free.

It's not a bad idea. Aside from a capital city itself, few locations see as many international visitors as an airport, so it's a useful way to pique the interest of the curious and to embed a favourite son's (and thus far, sadly, they almost are all sons) name in the vocabulary of the wider world. Which isn't unimportant, as unlike many other art forms, the chance for someone to accidentally encounter a classical composer's work is increasingly limited, invariably requiring an active choice to listen to a recording or attend a concert.

'Nobody has ever put up a statue to a critic,' Sibelius famously said. And while it's true that many a composer has been immortalised in bronze or stone, plinths are often passed by easily without so much as a sideways gaze. There's no statue of Benjamin Britten in Lowestoft, where he was born (and I grew up), but I'd venture that having one of the town's

high schools named after him is a far more powerful way of inspiring the next generation. There's a Thomas Tallis school in Greenwich, and if there aren't other examples of schools named after local composers, there should be.

For obvious reasons, architecture is very visibly woven into the tapestry of our cultural awareness (though even this can't be taken for granted: think of the battles Britain's Victorian Society had to fight just 50 years ago, or the controversy today every time a Brutalist building is given listed status). The ubiquity of fine art reproduction helps ensure crowds continue to flock to our galleries. The place of great writers in our heritage is rightly revered without question. Composers: less so. I would strongly suspect the works, perhaps even the names, of Tallis and Britten, or for that matter Janáček and, outside of Finland, Sibelius, are less familiar to those who do not already know and love classical music than, say, Sir Christopher Wren, Jane Austen or Pablo Picasso.

Naming an airport – or school, or even, for that matter, a shopping centre, as Lowestoft also did in honour of Britten – after a composer might seem an oddly modern gesture, but let's take every opportunity we can to highlight the importance of our art form's most significant figures. And in the meantime, while the Finnish airport authorities ponder the matter of a new name, Helsinki airport is offering a Sibelius photography exhibition alongside gate 37, should you find yourself in its departure lounge with some time to spare.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com



THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'It's always a pleasure to learn from others on a subject as detailed as how we came to have a modern

gramophone industry,' says MIKE ASHMAN, author of our feature on the hi-fi revolution. 'I'm eternally intrigued by the link between RAF aerial reconnaissance and capturing Stravinsky's orchestra in a recording studio.'



'The symphonies of Carl Nielsen are always an adventure into his personal, often enigmatic world, says

DAVID PATRICK STEARNS. whose Collection on the Third Symphony features in this issue. 'In exploring this discography, I have enjoyed a constantly unfolding understanding of what this marvel of a piece needs from its performers.'



For regular critic PHILIP CLARK. preparing for this issue's feature on Schumann was a hugely enjoyable process. 'Writing

about the Schumann symphonies? File under labour of love!' he says. 'Talking to Heinz Holliger and Sir Simon Rattle, in particular, made me realise how the world behind the notes is as fascinating as those notes are themselves.'

THE REVIEWERS Andrew Achenbach • Nalen Anthoni • Mike Ashman • Philip Clark • Alexandra Coghlan • Rob Cowan (consultant reviewer) • Jeremy Dibble • Peter Dickinson • Jed Distler • Duncan Druce • Adrian Edwards Richard Fairman • David Fallows • David Fanning • Iain Fenlon • Fabrice Fitch • Jonathan Freeman-Attwood Caroline Gill • Edward Greenfield • David Gutman • Lindsay Kemp • Philip Kennicott • Tess Knighton • Richard Lawrence • Ivan March • Ivan Moody • Bryce Morrison • Jeremy Nicholas • Christopher Nickol • Geoffrey Norris Richard Osborne • Stephen Plaistow • Peter Quantrill • Guy Rickards • Malcolm Riley • Marc Rochester • Julie Anne Sadie • Edward Seckerson • Hugo Shirley • Pwyll ap Siôn • Harriet Smith • Ken Smith • David Patrick Stearns • David Threasher • David Vickers • John Warrack • Richard Whitehouse • Arnold Whittall • Richard Wigmore • William Yeoman

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts. which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is the magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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EDITORIAL

7738 5454 **Fax** 020 7733 2325 email gramophone EDITOR AND PUBLISHER Martin Cullingford

DEPUTY EDITOR Sarah Kirkup / 020 7501 6365 REVIEWS EDITOR Andrew Mellor / 020 7501 6367 ONLINE AND FEATURES EDITOR James McCarthy / 020 7501 6366

SUB-EDITOR David Threasher / 020 7501 6370 ART DIRECTOR Dinah Lone / 020 7501 6689 PICTURE EDITOR Sunita Sharma-Gibson /

AUDIO EDITOR Andrew Everard

EDITORIAL ADMINISTRATOR Libby McPhee LIBRARIAN Richard Farr

THANKS TO Hannah Nepil and Marija Đurić Speare EDITOR-IN-CHIEF James Jolly

ADVERTISING

Phone 020 7738 5454 Fax 020 7733 2325 il gramophone.ads@markallengroup.com SALES MANAGER

SENIOR SALES EXECUTIVE Luke Battersby / 020 7501 6373

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BACK ISSUES

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PUBLISHING

HEAD OF MARKETING AND DIGITAL STRATEGY Luca Da Re / 020 7501 6362 MARKETING EXECUTIVE Julian Halse

DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT Matthew Cianfara DATA AND DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

DIRECTOR Tom Pollar PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Richard Hamshere 01722 716997

PRODUCTION MANAGER Jon Redmayne
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR Sally Boettcher

SUBSCRIPTIONS MANAGER Chris Hoskins

PUBLISHING DIRECTOR Siân Harrington MANAGING DIRECTOR Jon Benson
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Ben Allen CHAIRMAN Mark Allen

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A Steffani opera from Boston

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New music by Byström, Francesconi, Chin and Thomas; latest Nielsen from New York; round-up of CPE Bach releases; Søndergård's Sibelius

CHAMBER

Stenhammar Quartet finish their Stenhammar cycle; Giardini Quartet play Fauré and Bonis; Isabelle Faust and friends record Hindemith

INSTRUMENTAL

Olivier Marron plays Britten's cello suites; Chopin from Luisada, Tyson and Beth Briggs; Marc Rochester on contemporary music for organ

VOCAL

Britten and Schubert songs from Robin Tritschler, BBC New Generation Artist; German Lieder on Challenge Classics from Prégardien father and son

REISSUES

Conductor Jean Martinon remembered in major reissues from RCA and Australian Eloquence

OPERA

Bizet's The Pearl Fishers from Naples; discovering Catel's Les bayadères; Bocelli sings Des Grieux in Puccini's Manon Lescaut; Frankfurt's Ring ends

REPLAY

Richter's complete recordings for RCA and Columbia; David Oistrakh in his prime

BOOKS

A new study investigates the life and work of Harry Partch, Hobo Composer; Susan Tomes reflects on her career in Sleeping in Temples

GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION 102

David Patrick Stearns chooses the best available recordings of Nielsen's Symphony No 3

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ROBERT SCHUMANN

Harriet Smith talks to three leading musicians Isabelle Faust, Jean-Guihen Queyras and Alexander Melnikov – about their period approach to the composer's trios and concertos. Also in this issue, Philip Clark explores the symphonies with Sir Simon Rattle, Heinz Holliger, Robin Ticciati and Yannick Nézet-Séguin

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As Decca releases a new box-set dedicated to its pioneering recordings from 1944-56, Mike Ashman charts the history of the post-war revolution in recording technology

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Jed Distler celebrates the legacy of one of the 20th century's finest pianists, Sviatoslav Richter -'a chameleon who couldn't be pigeonholed'

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A former viola player of the Berlin Philharmonic, Brett Dean is one of today's most compelling composers, argues Paul Griffiths

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2 CD

Franz Xaver Richter

Requiem Sinfonia Con Fuga De profundis

CzechEn semble Baroque Roman Válek conductor





Sergey Taneyev The Complete Quintets

Martinů Quartet Jitka Hosprová viola Olga Vinokur piano Jiří Bárta *cello*

2 CD

Radek Baborák Orquestrina

Piazzolla / Ravel / Fauré / Kogan / Saglietti



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EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED WITH GRAMOPHONE'S LABEL OF THE YEA



DCD34132

John Kitchen

The Usher Hall Organ Vol II

Edinburgh City Organist John Kitchen has established a hugely popular series of concerts featuring the Usher Hall's monumental organ, and draws on its repertoire for this glorious centenary celebration.

'Cecilia McDowall's attractive opener makes suitably sparkling play with the higher reaches of the keyboards and proves a worthy companion to S.S. Wesley's evergreen Holsworthy Church Bells, which features the organ's two-octave Carillon ... The heft of the diapasons and the incision of the reed chorus come to the fore in the Guilmant and Jeremy Cull's superb transcription of the MacCunn overture. By contrast, Clifton Hughes's Rudolph variations are lit by some tasteful theatre-organ hues and Kitchen concludes with a richly registered account of the Bach Passacaglia and Fugue which shows just how versatile both player and his instrument are'

- Gramophone, February 2015



DCD34161

Purcell's Revenge: Sweeter than Roses?

Olivia Chaney, James Bowman, Ana Silvera, Jim Moray, Concerto Caledonia

Delving into the past is never a simple matter for David McGuinness and his indomitable Concerto Caledonia. But the present venture, even more than most, eludes verbal description. The group return - in the company of some starry guests - to the territory of their 2011 Britten tribute Revenge of the Folksingers, now engaging with music by Henry Purcell in a tapestry of arrangements and creative responses which is never less than surprising. Variations by eighteenth-century Scot James Oswald rub shoulders with the Purcell tunes they are based on, while original songs by Olivia Chaney and Ana Silvera and some literally 'electrifying' instrumental contributions add to the general air of expectations confounded.

New in March 2015



DCD34141



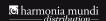
La Fauvette Passerinette: a Messiaen premiere Peter Hill piano

In 2012, leading pianist and Messiaen scholar Peter Hill made a remarkable discovery among the composer's papers: several pages of tightly written manuscript from 1961, constituting a near-complete and hitherto unknown work for piano. Here he sets this glittering addition to Messiaen's piano output in the context both of the composer's own earlier work and of music by the many younger composers on whom Messiaen was a profound influence – from Stockhausen and Takemitsu to George Benjamin, who like Hill himself worked closely with the composer in the years before his death.

'A new Messiaen work may be the focus here, but this would be an outstanding recital even without that enticement'

- BBC Music Magazine, November 2014, INSTRUMENTAL CHOICE

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We also host our own exclusive music festivals on land and at sea, and arrange short breaks with opera, ballet or concert tickets, to all the great classical cities in Europe.

THE BEETHOVEN FESTIVAL IN BONN

A SEVEN NIGHT HOLIDAY | 4 SEPTEMBER 2015

The Beethoven Festival is one of the leading music festivals in Germany, with concert programmes stretching far beyond the works of Beethoven alone. Under the direction of Nike Wagner, it attracts today's finest musicians and orchestras, to the city where Beethoven was born in 1770.

Our visit to Bonn includes the opening concert with Daniel Barenboim, three orchestral concerts, an evening of sonatas for cello and piano, and a piano recital by András Schiff. We stay at the 4* Hilton in Bonn, adjacent to the Beethovenhalle and five minutes' walk from the historic centre of the city. The holiday will also include visits to Cologne, Königswinter and Brühl.



Price from £2,388 per person for seven nights including return flights to Cologne, accommodation with breakfast, four dinners, one lunch, tickets for five performances, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Leader.

WAGNER'S RING CYCLE IN SOFIA A SEVEN NIGHT HOLIDAY | 3 JULY 2015

The Sofia Opera celebrated the bicentenary of Wagner's birth in 2013 with critically acclaimed performances of the composer's Der Ring des Nibelungen. Such was the demand that the company decided to repeat the Cycle in 2015.

With performances on alternate days, visitors can not only enjoy Sofia but also venture out of the capital and spend one night in Plovdiv, a historic town with much Ottoman style architecture and impressive Roman sites. Based at the 4* Crystal Palace Hotel, the itinerary also includes a half day tour of Sofia and the National Historical Museum. We shall also visit two Byzantine Churches, the Alexander Nevsky Memorial Cathedral, Rila and Bachkovo Monasteries, and the church at Boyana.

Price from £1,645 per person for seven nights including return flights to Sofia, all transfers, accommodation with breakfast, six dinners, six lunches, tickets for four operas, all entrance fees and gratuities and the services of a local guide and the Kirker Tour Leader.

THE GRAFENEGG MUSIC FESTIVAL

A FIVE NIGHT ESCORTED HOLIDAY | 2 SEPTEMBER 2015

The Grafenegg Festival has established itself as one of Europe's most prestigious festivals and this year offers the opportunity to enjoy two of the world's greatest orchestras, the Berlin Philharmonic and the Vienna Philharmonic, in one holiday.

Concerts are held in the architecturally dramatic Wolkenturm, the "Tower of Clouds" in the grounds of the country estate of the grand Metternich family. Staying at the 4* Steigenberger Hotel set amongst the famous



Grüner-Veltliner vineyards, we enjoy visits to the picturesque village of Dürnstein, the Benedictine Abbey at Melk perched high above the Danube and a panoramic tour of Vienna. We will also go to the pretty town of Tulln on the Danube to see the birthplace of Egon Schiele (1890 - 1918).

Price from £1,998 for five nights including flights, transfers, accommodation with breakfast, four dinners, one lunch, three concerts, a full programme of sightseeing, and the services of the Kirker Tour Lecturer.

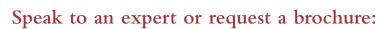
MUSICAL ST. PETERSBURG

A FIVE NIGHT ESCORTED HOLIDAY | 9 NOVEMBER 2015

St Petersburg is once again one of the most musically dynamic cities in the world, with performances rivalling London, Vienna and New York. The Mariinsky alone now gives its name to two opera houses and a major, modern concert hall.

Our tour of St Petersburg is led by Elizabeth Wilson, an accomplished musician who studied with the great Russian cellist Rostropovich. We will visit apartments where two of Russia's greatest composers lived – Shostakovich and Mussorgsky. Other visits will include a backstage tour of the Mariinsky Theatre, a visit to the Alexander Nevsky Cemetery, Pushkin's Apartment, and the Rimsky-Korsakov apartment, the recently opened Fabergé Museum, the Hermitage and the Russian

Price from £1,996 per person for five nights including accommodation with breakfast, four dinners, tickets for three performances, a Russian Visa, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Leader and a local guide.



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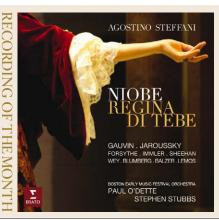


GRAMOPHONE Editor's choice



Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews





STEFFANI

Niobe, regina di Tebe Soloists; **Boston Early Music** Festival Orchestra / Paul O'Dette, Stephen Stubbs Erato ® 3 2564 63435-4 **► DAVID VICKERS'S REVIEW IS ON** PAGE 24

Assemble some of today's leading Baroque singers and instrumentalists, offer them a lesser-known opera rich in thrilling arias and elegant dance-like rhythms, and the result is a hugely enjoyable and impressive addition to the catalogue.



BERG Lyric Suite MENDELSSOHN String Quartet No 2 Tetzlaff Quartet AVI-Music (F) AVI8553266

Four individual and searching players make this a riveting chamber disc, precision and personality working together to full effect.

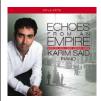
► REVIEW ON PAGE 50



HINDEMITH Sonatas Alexander Melnikov pf and friends Harmonia Mundi 🖲 HMC90 5271 Two of the artists

featured in our Schumann cover story form part of this compellingly performed selection of Hindemith sonatas from a group of first-class musicians.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 54



'ECHOES FROM AN EMPIRE' Karim Said pf

Opus Arte 🖲 OACD9029D Music written in an

era on the cusp of profound world change, from a pianist on the cusp - if this disc, and praise from the likes of Barenboim are anything to go by – of great success.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 73



BRAHMS. REINECKE Clarinet Sonatas

Michael Collins c/ Michael McHale pf Chandos © CHAN10844 Delightful playing,

from the partnership of Michael Collins and Michael McHale that scores highly in these pages time after time - and rightly so.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 51



'WINDS & PIANO' Les Vents Français with Eric Le Sage pf Warner Classics (S) (3) 2564 62318-5 A 'positive

dream team' of wind players, as our critic puts it, all convey a sheer joy of playing in this three-disc feast of music for wind quintet and piano.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 61



MACHAUT

'The Dart of Love' The Orlando Consort Hyperion © CDA68008 In excellent performances,

The Orlando Consort explore the rich variety in Machaut's music - a composer whose music lies right at the heart of this ensemble's raison d'être.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 82



HAYDN. HUMMEL

Piano Trios Trio Chausson Mirare (F) MIR271 Conversational and committed, Trio

Chausson's Haydn moves from urgency to the more cheerful without for a moment letting up on their thrilling exploration of every line and theme.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 53



LISZT Piano Sonata. Piano Works Angela Hewitt pf Hyperion © CDA68067 The catalogue swells with excellent

performances of Liszt's formidable B minor Piano Sonata but Angela Hewitt's is a superb addition to place among the very best.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 71



PÄRT 'Tintinnabuli' The Tallis Scholars / **Peter Phillips** Gimell © CDGIM049 The purity of The Tallis Scholars' renowned

sound lends itself perfectly to this music, often as sparse in score as it is so powerfully rich in atmosphere.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 83



DVD/BLU-RAY

R STRAUSS Also sprach Zarathustra, etc Royal Concertgebouw Orch / Andris Nelsons C Major Entertainment

(F) **22** 718908: (F) **22** 719004

A chance to watch the conductor who topped last year's Also sprach Collection conduct the work with the RCO.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 43



REISSUE/ARCHIVE **RACHMANINOV** Music for Two Pianos

Martha Argerich pf et al Warner Classics (\$) (2) 2564 62359-4

Superb musicianship on display from Lugano in Rachmaninov's two-piano works.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 57



Listen to many of the Editor's Choice recordings online at

qobuz.com

FOR THE RECORD



Sir Simon Rattle will conduct the Berlin Philharmonic in a groundbreaking live stream

Two concerts to be live-streamed in beyond-DSD quality for the first time

here's a lot of interest in streaming music of late, with Qobuz and Tidal offering online music at CD quality, and Meridian's Master Quality
Authenticated (MQA) system promising CD quality and beyond over relatively restricted internet bandwidth. Now a group of Japanese companies is getting together to push the limits of live music on the internet even further, with plans for two concerts to be broadcast free in beyond-SACD quality in April.

Backed by Korg and Sony, the DSD Live Streaming project will offer one concert from the Tokyo Spring Festival on April 5, and then the Berlin Philharmonic under Sir Simon Rattle live from its home city less than a week later, on April 11. Both concerts will be available in DSD5.6 digital audio to anyone with a home computer, an internet connection and a suitable DSD-capable digital-to-analogue converter.

The two events are described as 'a proof-of-concept test for DSD online music distribution', and the Tokyo concert is a marathon nine-hour performance from the Tokyo Bunka Kaikan Recital Hall, including works by Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart. The concert starts at 11.00 JST (04.00 CET/03.00 BST).

The following weekend the Berlin Philharmonic, no stranger to online music streaming via its own Digital Concert Hall service, will perform Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust* with soloists Charles Castronovo (Faust), Joyce DiDonato (Marguerite), Ludovic Tézier (Méphistophélès), and Florian Boesch (Brander). The concert is at 19.00 CET (18.00 BST) on April 11, and 02.00 JST on April 12 for Japanese listeners, and will also be broadcast in high-definition video via the orchestra's video service. The DSD5.6 audio stream will also be available on demand for a limited period after the live transmission.

DSD5.6 uses double the sampling rate of standard SACD, and 128 times that of CD, so the amount of data to be transmitted will be very large, and this is the first time such a live transmission via the internet has been attempted. To listen, users will need free software to be made available via the DSD Live Streaming website, and a suitable USB DAC to connect their computer to headphones or their audio system.



George Osborne announces tax relief for Britain's orchestras

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, has announced details of the government's tax relief plan for Britain's orchestras. The new tax relief had first been announced in last year's Autumn Statement but the announcement revealed that it will consist of a reduction in corporation tax or tax credits on rehearsal costs, player fees and venue hire. There are additional benefits for touring projects.

Osborne said: 'As part of the government's long-term economic plan, we are backing our creative industries. I want to make sure our great orchestras continue to thrive. Our new tax relief will encourage orchestras to perform across the whole of the UK – helping secure the future of live performances in the UK.'

Salonen named New York Phil's Composer-in-Residence

The New York Philharmonic has named Esa-Pekka Salonen its new Composer-in-Residence. He will compose works for the orchestra for three years, beginning in the 2015/16 season.

Salonen, who is Principal Conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra in London and former Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, saw his Violin Concerto reach a worldwide audience last year when it was featured in an advert for Apple's iPad Air. That advert was broadcast on television channels worldwide. In the 2015/16 season the New York Philharmonic will perform Salonen's LA Variations (September 25-26, 2015) and Karawane (March 17-19, 2016), and Salonen himself will conduct Messiaen's Turangalîla-Symphonie (March 10-12, 2016). Salonen will also oversee the Philharmonic's new biennial music festival in June 2016.

Aida Garifullina signs exclusive contract with Decca Classics

Russian soprano Aida Garifullina has signed an exclusive recording contract with Decca Classics. Her debut, which will feature music by Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov alongside folksongs, will be recorded in Vienna and released in August.



Aida Garifullina: Operalia glory to Decca contract

Garifullina was born in 1987 in Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan, and came to international attention by winning the Operalia competition in 2013. The Managing Director of Decca Classics, Paul Moseley, said: 'Aida radiates star quality and has a uniquely distinctive voice, immediately recognisable for its agility, emotive power and Eastern promise.'

Warner Music Poland buys Polskie Nagrania

The Polish state-owned record company Polskie Nagrania has been bought for €1.9m by Warner Music Poland. The catalogue of over 30,000 recordings – though acquired for its pop music – has a substantial and distinguished classical offering which dates back to the 1920s.

Polskie Nagrania was created in 1956 when the vinyl manufacturer Muza merged with the record house Polskie Nagrania. Artists who have recorded for the label include Krystian Zimerman, Witold Rowicki and Antoni Wit, as well as many major Polish composers including Szymanowski, Lutosławski, Bacewicz and Penderecki.

Nézet-Séguin extends his contract in Philadelphia

Yannick Nézet-Séguin has signed his first contract extension with the Philadelphia Orchestra since becoming their Music Director in 2012. His new contract will see him lead the orchestra until the end of the 2021/22 season. Nézet-Séguin is also the Music Director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic and has been the Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Orchestre Métropolitain since 2000. He was Principal Guest Conductor of the LPO from 2008 to 2014.

Jonathan Nott to head the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande

he new Music and Artistic Director of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande is Jonathan Nott. The Geneva-based ensemble announced the appointment after an overwhelming majority vote by the musicians of the OSR and the board. He will take up his new role at the start of the 2016/17 season.

The British-born conductor is currently Principal Conductor of the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra (a role he has held since 2000). He is also Music Director of the Tokyo SO as well as Principal Conductor of, and Artistic Advisor to, the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie.

The Suisse Romande Orchestra was headed for nearly half a century by Ernest Ansermet, who honed the ensemble and, through his recordings for Decca, put the orchestra on the musical map. Nott joins an impressive line-up of conductors who have headed the OSR in recent decades: Wolfgang Sawallisch (1970-80), Horst Stein (1980-85), Armin Jordan (1985-97), Fabio Luisi (1997-2002), Pinchas Steinberg (2002-05), Marek Janowski (2005-12) and Neeme Järvi (2012-15).

With his Bamberg SO, Nott has recorded the complete Mahler symphonies for Tudor – three instalments of which (Nos 1, 3 and 7) secured a *Gramophone*'s Editor's Choice accolade. Our review of the Seventh Symphony suggested that 'We've come to expect certain qualities from this Bamberg/Nott Mahler cycle – not least real stylistic awareness and exceptional attention to detail – and this beautifully prepared and acutely well-heard Seventh is no exception.'



Jonathan Nott succeeds Neeme Järvi at the OSR

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BLOGS

Gramophone's blogs offer musical insights and opinion from leading classical artists and writers. Recent *Gramophone* bloggers include Daniel Hope, Benjamin Grosvenor and Natalie Clein, while Tasmin Little (pictured) is a frequent contributor.

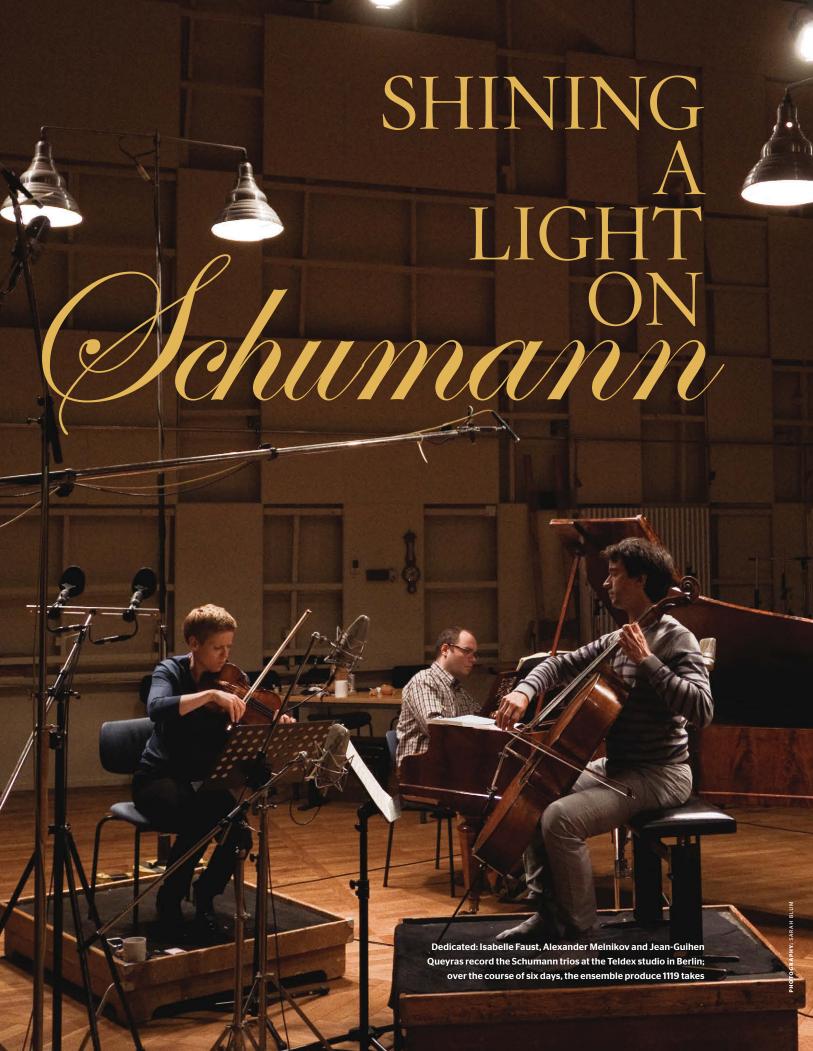


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GRAMOPHONE'S TOP 10s

If you're after a recording recommendation for a particular work, then a *Gramophone*Top 10 list is the perfect place to visit. We have Top 10s dedicated to everything from the works of Rachmaninov, Beethoven and Mozart to genres such as symphonies, string quartets and British choral works. Each recommended recording is linked to its original *Gramophone* review, and we are frequently adding new Top 10 lists, so do keep your eyes peeled.





The Teldex studio
is not an easy place
to find: seemingly
beyond the reach of the
average satnav, it perplexed
more than one Berlin taxi driver

during my visit. The route, though circuitous, was certainly scenic. 'Leafy suburb' may be a cliché but it perfectly sums up the area in which this venue nestles. The building itself, as producer and recording supremo Martin Sauer explained, was originally a dance hall before the war. Then it was a recording studio, and then, as Sauer said with an eloquent hand gesture, 'Warner sold Teldec'.

I arrived for the final day of sessions for the record label Harmonia Mundi: six whole days were being spent recording Schumann's three piano trios – just one-and-a-half CDs' worth of music. At the end there were 1119 takes for the three pieces. Clearly, something exceptional was afoot. As Sauer explained, 'We did the slow movement of the First Trio yesterday. They said, "That's good", then we spent three hours on it. But it's recording – you may as well go as far as you can.'

But then these are no ordinary musicians. The trio of Isabelle Faust, Alexander (Sasha) Melnikov and Jean-Guihen Ouevras (German-Russian-French Canadian) is one to reckon with. Their Beethoven trios disc for Harmonia Mundi (featuring a glorious Graff fortepiano) was on last year's Gramophone Awards shortlist. None of them is a stranger to awards ceremonies - who could forget the Gramophone Award-winning traversal of Beethoven's violin sonatas by Faust and Melnikov from 2010? Or more recently Queyras's equally lavishly praised cycle of the same composer's cello sonatas, not to mention earlier discs such as his Ligeti Cello Concerto with Boulez? What makes this line-up so fascinating is that it's all about challenging perceived notions. Not by grandstanding or by dogmatism, but by a sense of exploration and of taking nothing for granted. That's as true of Faust's Bach Sonatas and Partitas and her probing Berg Concerto as it is of Queyras's Bach cello suites (one of my favourites of all time) or Melnikov's way of painstakingly dissecting a piece and then putting it back together again so you hear it as never before,

as witness Shostakovich's piano concertos. None of them is a period-instrument specialist as such, yet all apply elements of this practice to everything they approach. The three were already hard at work when I arrived at the sessions. Three more contrasting personalities you couldn't imagine, yet somehow their differences gelled to extraordinary effect.

As I enter, they're recording the slow movement of Schumann's Second Trio. The details of how to phrase a particular motif becomes the subject of intense discussion. Faust's gut strings are doing exactly what gut strings are famous for doing: playing up. 'I didn't know I was so strong,' she mutters as one pings hard against the varnish of her 'Sleeping Beauty' Strad. Melnikov, seated at a surpassingly beautiful Streicher instrument from 1847, is the precise one: every take he checks against the metronome. Somewhat incongruously there's a mascot on the piano. It later transpires, after some digging, that this is Bernd, one of three creatures with whom Melnikov habitually travels. 'He loves doing press interviews and coverage,' he jokes.

Martin Sauer, conducting from the control room, is encouraging, addressing each in a different language – Queyras in French, Faust in German, Melnikov mainly in English. The players describe him as 'a phenomenal midwife' - to Queyras he is the Grand Priest. There's much discussion about whether there should be a *ritardando* at bar 33. Detail is everything, but equally so are long takes: despite the stop-start nature of the recording process, the musical thinking is seamless. That Streicher sounds as alluring as it looks, too, with moments such as the passage where Schumann breaks out into semiquavers appearing more pellucid than ever before. At one point Queyras suggests that a balance is needed between being exact and 'aah' - gesticulating to make his point. And the final bars, with their sighing phrases from the string players, are breathtaking – all the more so for being vibrato-free.

This is the first time that the trios and the concertos have been recorded as an entity on period instruments. Each trio will be coupled with a concerto with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra under the Spanish conductor Pablo Heras-Casado and released on Harmonia Mundi – there will be



 $Trusty\ trio:\ lsabelle\ Faust,\ Alexander\ Melnikov\ and\ Jean-Guihen\ Queyras\ have\ found\ an\ honesty\ and\ originality\ in\ their\ period-instrument\ interpretations\ of\ Schumann\ period\ found\ and\ period\ found\ fou$

"I didn't know I was so strong," mutters

Isabelle Faust as one of her gut strings

pings against the varnish of her Strad'

three volumes in all. These particular sessions culminate with sushi and champagne, but Queyras has a crisis on his hands. He's flying to the States the next day and has to get his Berlin bowmaker to certify the ivory on his bow to get through US customs. He dashes off across town, and we're down to two.

I dive straight in with the question of why there are still relatively few chamber groups tackling 19th-century music using period instruments, especially given that the lighter-framed keyboard instruments

help to right the essential imbalance of the piano trio genre. Sasha Melnikov ponders. 'With an orchestra you immediately have a very different sound so you would never confuse it with a modern-instrument orchestra. With just one instrument it's less immediately obvious. Another factor is that recording standards mean that an audience expects absolute precision in terms of intonation and so on. And period string instruments are much, much more difficult in that respect. For me personally it's different playing on period pianos because the sound is more alive. But the majority of concert halls are unwilling to accept this because they're afraid of people asking why something is out of tune. So the answer is that it is just easier not to have period instruments.'

Isabelle Faust adds: 'If you play alone on gut strings, you don't necessarily have the immediate positive effects but you do have all the disadvantages. It took us a very long time to record these trios – they're very difficult works in any case,

but playing them on gut strings makes everything more so. As a string player you really have to know that you want to do this as the advantages are not necessarily so obvious to an audience. I have some modern-playing colleagues who also tried gut strings but very few really like it. Most come back saying it's

not worth it – the risks are too great. You're in this new world of clarity, of articulation, of a different kind of timbre for every note on every string. It's much more difficult to play in tune and to be confident

about a string's ability to bring out a note because so much can affect it – if it's a wet day, for example. But once you get a taste for it you're hooked, and you throw yourself into this cold water even if the public don't always like it.'

Difficulties notwithstanding, there must be advantages too, I suggest, not least concerning balance. 'The Schumann pieces are so complex and also often very interwoven in register – where the bass is suddenly in the top and the violin is in the middle register,' concurs Faust. I mention that there was a striking example of that in the sessions, at the end of the Second Trio's slow movement. 'Yes, exactly. And there is so much going on harmonically, so many little jewels, which here we can treasure without having to play a particular note *fortissimo*.' 'And so many overtones too,' adds Melnikov, 'which are drowned out by metal strings or a big Steinway.'

This brings us on to the Violin Concerto, a work which even now isn't entirely accepted for the masterpiece it is,

PHOTOGRAPHY: SARAH BLUM

and which has one of the strangest histories of any work by a great composer. Initially misunderstood by the great violinist Joseph Joachim, who suggested it should not be published until 100 years after Schumann's death – a view which both Clara Schumann and, at least initially, Brahms shared – the concerto wasn't included in the complete Schumann edition. However, Joachim's great-nieces Jelly d'Arányi and Adila Fachiri claimed in the 1930s to have received instructions from Schumann during a seance that they resurrect the work, which they duly did.

Faust again notes that this concerto is 'all the time in the middle register. You have this huge octave when you first enter and then everything is playing around the middle. So you have no chance normally to cut through the orchestra.'

How much is the incomprehension surrounding his late music, not least the Third Piano Trio and the Violin Concerto, connected with people not understanding the idiom, rather than the oft-repeated notion that by this point Schumann was insane?

Faust is unwavering: 'I don't know exactly what happened in his head - there's no doubt that he was a very extreme character – but I'm very sure that no one could write a piece like the Violin Concerto in a mad state.' Melnikov adds: 'First of all, what is mad and what is not mad? Personally, I think the Violin Concerto may be one of the greatest violin concertos ever written. I'm obviously wrong,' he adds laconically, 'but I never had a moment when I didn't understand this work.' Faust backs this up: 'When I first learnt the piece, which was only a few years ago, I was very worried because I didn't yet know what to do with it in all respects. This was when Sasha heard it for the first time, and he just "got" it - it was immediately clear to him what a fantastic work it was, whereas it took me time to get into it.' As for the last movement, which is considered the weakest by many, Melnikov points out that 'everyone plays it too fast. You can count on one hand the violinists who play it at the correct tempo.' Faust interrupts: 'Almost on one finger!' But Melnikov disagrees, a veritable walking encyclopaedia of recordings: 'No, there is you, there is Gidon Kremer, Anthony Marwood. But the way Isabelle plays this concerto is so far the ultimate performance of this work. You can always tell in a concert hall that there are people who get it and those who don't. Having said that, I don't think people "get" the Piano Concerto either, for all sorts of reasons. I love the work but I think it's the least successful of the three concertos, the Violin Concerto being best and the Cello Concerto lying in the middle.'

If this seems almost perverse, Faust is quick to add: 'He's not just saying that – he really is convinced!' Melnikov explains: 'Everyone knows the story that in the 1830s Schumann was unhappy with the piano concertos being written around that time and he wanted to do something different – as he wrote, he wanted to redefine the genre. And I think that's true of the Violin Concerto too, although he didn't write a letter saying so. But the problem was that even the best violinists – Joachim among them – didn't understand it. For a long time there was a feeling that the solo part wasn't "good enough" to show off a violinist's skills. But now we are finally freeing ourselves from a point of reference buried deep in the 19th century, which means that this concerto can be resurrected.'

He warms to his subject: 'Schumann didn't really have much of a professional training – he didn't study counterpoint till he was in his 40s, for example. But his genius was so extraordinary that he could write this entire body of piano masterpieces when he was still very young, but then he made incredible progress and he studied composition seriously. And if you study something when you're 40 years old, it's not the same as when you're 18. This led to a "late" musical language that is



anything but crazy. There is nothing unsuccessful about this music. That idea makes me angry!'

Faust, meanwhile, objects to the long-held view that the Third Piano Trio is the least 'successful' of the trios: 'It's our favourite! And when we play all three trios in a single concert it isn't less well received.' Of course that might just be down to the performance, I suggest: Schumann is, after all, easily tarnished by insensitive playing. Melnikov is vehement on this point: 'That's true, it's not robust, but there's no excuse for getting tempi wrong because he puts metronome marks everywhere - and if you listen to Fanny Davies's recordings [who herself studied with Clara Schumann] then you'll hear that she observes these absolutely. And the advantage of authentic instruments is that they at least tell you where *not* to go. The proportions, dynamics and sonorities all make much more sense - you don't have to be constantly correcting these as you do on modern instruments. If you go back to modern instruments after using period ones, you play in a different way.'

Isabelle Faust agrees: 'Yes, and as a string player, your vibrato is immediately different.' I'm intrigued by this, as her general lack of vibrato – in whatever repertoire she's playing, be it Bach or Berg – is one of the most

striking features about her approach. She laughs. 'On gut strings it's often too risky to use much – maybe it's because I'm an amateur gut-string player!' Adds Melnikov with a glint in his eye: 'I started to play with Isabelle all those years ago because she was the only one not using too much of this horrible vibrato! Today's it's used like soy sauce in a bad Chinese restaurant: it's everywhere. There's nothing wrong with vibrato – in fact I love it – but too much can be annoying!'

Faust recalls a seminal experience when, as a 16-year-old, she performed for Christoph Poppen, with whom she was hoping to study: 'I went and played a Mozart concerto for him, and he said, "Can you now play that non-vibrato?" I thought this was akin to him asking me to play just open strings or to hold the bow completely differently – as if it were something technical. I was stupid back then. But he was the first one to tell me – and even today very few modern-instrument teachers seem to talk about it. But vibrato is, after all, only a form of ornamentation.'

Another vexing question for these exacting players is that of scores. Faust says regretfully that they weren't able to get at the manuscripts of the trios. 'We used the Henle versions and looked at the first edition. With the Violin Concerto, I started to learn it before the first Urtext editions came out, so I had to work from the Schott edition from 1937 – though without the emendations by Hindemith, who put some of the writing in the final movement up an octave – which was still very much changed because the piece was supposed to be unplayable. That forced me to go back to the manuscript, which happens



Precise: Faust and Melnikov argue the finer details of Schumann

'Even the best violinists didn't understand the Violin Concerto; they thought the solo part wasn't "good enough" – Alexander Melnikov

to be here in Berlin [where Faust also lives]. From this material I tried to make some sense of it – and then, when I compared it to the newer Urtext editions, I felt I hadn't done too bad a job!'

Similarly, for the Piano Concerto, Melnikov took nothing for granted: 'I went to Düsseldorf, to the Heinrich Heine archive, to see the manuscript. It broadens your horizons seeing any manuscript but this one was interesting in terms of what has been crossed out. As a composer, you might bitterly regret some of those decisions, so I took the liberty of putting some of them back in: it's mainly a matter of accents and that kind of thing. So often, even the best editions today don't take much care about where dynamic markings are placed in terms of left and right hands, which is such a basic thing for a pianist. But then in the manuscript you immediately see from the way it's written whether it's something very important or just something in passing. Of course you end up having more questions than answers. But it helps to give you a better perspective.'

This brings us on to the question of Schumann's orchestration. We're now thankfully past the era in which he was regarded as a poor orchestrator, and it seems that, again, this is an area where period instruments truly come into their own, particularly in

matters of balance and texture. As Faust says, 'With a work like the Schumann Violin Concerto, the most important thing is to have an orchestra that is really interested in the music and loves it and wants to find out about it.' Something that perhaps hampers something as hackneyed as the Piano Concerto? 'But all orchestras are afraid of its last movement,' Melnikov retorts. Faust sums it up rather neatly: 'They think they know the Piano Concerto. And with the Violin Concerto they think they know it's a bad piece. In both cases, they're wrong!'

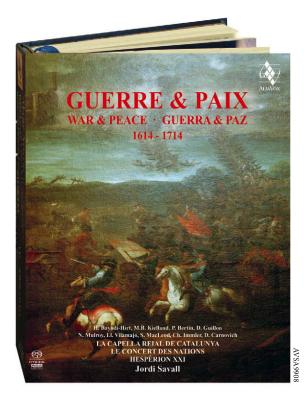
Faust found herself playing the Violin Concerto with Bernard Haitink and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe at last year's Lucerne Festival. 'Of course they're a moderninstrument ensemble but it shows that Schumann works particularly well with a chamber-sized orchestra. And Bernard hadn't done the Violin Concerto before so he looked at it as if it were a blank canvas. And there were no problems at all with the orchestration! How fantastic that, now in his 80s, a man who comes from a tradition of big orchestras is discovering that chamber orchestras can work so well for Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann and so on.' The conservative Lucerne Festival audience loved it, but I wonder whether it even mattered to these musicians what the public thought? 'Well we just want to get as close to what we think might be in this music, to its heart', says Faust. But Melnikov has the last word: 'If one really tries to be honest, one stays on the menu.' @ The first instalment of Harmonia Mundi's Schumann project – the Violin Concerto and the Third Piano Trio – is reviewed on page 40

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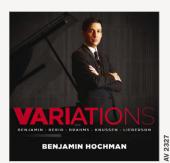


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For Rattle (left), Schumann must be 'light and singing'; when Holliger (right) looks at Schumann's scores, he feels like 'this composer knows the whole history of music'

Fantasy world

The diverse strands of Schumann's symphonic writing can come together to form something fantastical yet contained. Philip Clark explores why conductors such as Rattle, Holliger, Nézet-Séguin and Ticciati are immersing themselves in this highly individual sound world

usic that grapples with demons and is never wholly at ease, even when wings bless the darkness with glimpses of light – when you're Robert Schumann, angels are terrifying too.

The symphonic models are clear and we hear the ghostly spectre of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms and Mendelssohn – but no one has told Schumann's material that it needs to conform, and the music cannot help but spill over any frame its composer attempts to place around it. The first movement of his Symphony No 1 reaches an apparent cathartic end-point as a solo flute line marked *dolce* reconciles

grinding harmonic and structural inner tensions. Time to stop this madness. But then brass, percussion and trilling woodwinds unleash a stampeding burlesque march. Baleful chromatic inclines smudge the harmony, like Offenbach or Sousa turned on their dark side, and such instability derives from the restlessness of Schumann's mind, you think, rather than being an overtly conceptual compositional strategy.

The free jazz of the Second Symphony's sostenuto assai prologue, C major credentials asserted by having the strings play anything but, as the brass sustain pure C major triads; in the Third Symphony, that extra movement that sneaks





Nézet-Séguin's symphony cycle is 'the most unashamedly Romantic' of the four conductors; Ticciati finds Schumann's orchestration 'crazy', yet the palette 'extraordinary'

We think of Beethoven and Brahms

as being the grizzled old lions of

Austro-German symphonic tradition,

but Schumann's symphonies move

in before the finale, a cobwebby and gothic reimagining of the grounding contrapuntal principles of Renaissance music and Bach; and the audacious cyclic structure of the Fourth Symphony, each movement played *attacca* and dovetailing into the next. This music of demons and angels grapples also with angles – to take on structure, awkward punctuation, Schumann pushing form, his personal mission being to remould the symphony. And when the realisation dawns that Schumann composed the first version of what would become his Fourth

Symphony in the same year as his First Symphony, eyes blink in astonishment. The natural order of things would be to presume that Schumann's streamlined Fourth Symphony is a perfect distillation of the first three symphonies – but the pathway through Schumann's symphonic journey is filled with

unexpected and improbable twists and turns.

Deciding to record a cycle of the Schumann symphonies begs the question: what exactly should be recorded? And complementary but divergent ideas about the Schumann symphonies have been paraded as rarely before, with four major conductors during the past 18 months releasing four major cycles on disc. Sir Simon Rattle, with the Berlin Philharmonic, gives us four symphonies with the early 1841 version of the Fourth, while Yannick Nézet-Séguin (and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe) and Robin Ticciati (with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra) opt for Schumann's 1851 revised version. But Heinz Holliger and the WDR Symphony Orchestra of Cologne – like Sir John Eliot Gardiner and his Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, whose trailblazing 1997

Schumann cycle was given the boxed-up DG reissue treatment last year – perceive Schumann's symphonic evolution in seven stages. When Holliger completes his cycle during the next year and a half, Schumann's early Symphony in G minor (the Zwickau Symphony) will take its place alongside the first three canonic symphonies, both versions of the Fourth, and the oftenoverlooked mini-me symphony Overture, Scherzo and Finale – Schumann's compositional twists of fate put into historical context by a composer/conductor/oboist who has been obsessed

with the composer's enigma for more than 40 years.

I made Rattle's cycle my Critics' Choice album of the year in the December 2014 issue; I've also elevated Nézet-Séguin's to an equivalent position in the past. Ticciati's set has given me much pleasure too, and

past. Ticciati's set has given me much pleasure too, and even more to think about. Nézet-Séguin and Ticciati deploy chamber-orchestra string sections, with Ticciati most explicitly evoking period-instrument practice. Rattle's Berlin set carries its weightier orchestral ballast very elegantly, and his set became my portal back to Schumann after a longer period than I care to admit when my listening had been dominated by Beethoven, Brahms and Bruckner. Rattle's opulent, rapacious approach – the climax of the First Symphony's Opening movement and the Trio in the Second Symphony's Scherzo seemingly moving

faster than time itself, while the Berlin strings float the slow

back possible to Schumann's dream-built chimeric fantasy

over structural chess moves. Ticciati's sometimes manically

movement towards heaven – represented the warmest welcome

world, the heartfelt directness of his melodic fancy played out

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driven, flintier orchestral sound can be unexpectedly austere; Nézet-Séguin's cycle is the most unashamedly Romantic of the four, fevered-brow gesturing, rubato with attitude.

Despite their differences, though, the sets are unified by one underlying common denominator – none of them could have been recorded 30, or even 20, years ago. Over the phone from his home in Zurich, Heinz Holliger suppresses a laugh when I ask: why now? Why, suddenly, have maestros gone all Schumann crazy? 'Well, I started conducting him 30 years ago, when too many conductors had problems with Schumann,' he reflects. 'He was never a problem for pianists or composers – Debussy and Berg held him in great esteem – but conductors realised that you cannot try to sight-read Schumann; if you do, the music is completely grey.' And even 50 shades of grey would not be enough to express Schumann's multiverse of colour? 'He does not write out everything; he doesn't tell you which voice is the principal and which accompanies; nor whether one instrument should have a diminuendo while the others crescendo. To make a Schumann symphony sound light and transparent, as he intended, takes a lot of rehearsal. Each player needs to know whether they're playing part of only the harmony, or whether they are involved in the counterpoint. Schumann was a great writer of words too, and you need to understand how close the

phrasing is to speech. But many conductors are not so interested in this background; they just play what they read.'

Holliger reminds me that Schumann never heard more than 12 first violins during his whole life and, in his view, the

period-instrument movement has had a very positive effect on how conductors perceive appropriate orchestral weighting and internal balance. And when I talk to Sir Simon Rattle a few weeks earlier, he makes a characteristically smart analogy: 'We think of Beethoven and Brahms as being the grizzled old lions of Austro-German symphonic tradition,' he tells me, 'but Schumann's symphonies move like a panther. Beethoven plunges his feet forcefully through the ground; but Schumann's feet sprint and never fully touch the floor.'

Rattle can't quite explain why Schumann is suddenly so de rigueur, although sometimes, he says, mysterious forces collude to raise the collective consciousness around a particular composer. But the important thing for Rattle is that distinct and informed conductorly perspectives must all be celebrated. Ticciati's way is not his way, but Rattle admires enormously how he tackles the 1851 revision of the Fourth Symphony: 'Robin makes a clear case for how the revised version can retain the radical edge of the 1841 version. Still it sounds like a fireball and I take my hat off to him.'

Which Fourth Symphony? That's the most fundamental decision any wannabe Schumann conductor must make. To programme the 1841 version is to agree with Brahms, who owned the autograph score and wrote: 'It is a real pleasure to see anything so bright and spontaneous expressed with corresponding ease and grace.' He found the revised version charmless and stodgy, and Rattle and Holliger concur with Brahms, and each other, that the first version is much preferable – although they choose to do notably different things with that information. 'Schumann made the revised piece in a depressive state,' Rattle says, 'and Brahms was completely right about the relative merits of the two versions.' Holliger adds that Schumann's orchestra in Düsseldorf, which premiered the new version, was nowhere near as honed as the

standard of playing he had become accustomed to in Leipzig, while Schumann himself 'was heavier, and moved and spoke more slowly'. But the pertinent point for Holliger is that Schumann retained his high-velocity metronome marks. Rattle chooses to ignore the later rewrite – Holliger gives us both but attempts to play the 1851 version, as he says, 'retaining the true spirit of the earlier version'.

Holliger reminds me that he met Rattle 40 years ago when the young conductor invited him to perform Richard Strauss's Oboe Concerto with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. And Rattle clearly remains in awe of Holliger's status as a Schumann guru - 'Ask Heinz, when you speak to him, to tell you about the tempo relationships in the symphonies and about his extraordinary discovery in the fourth movement of the Rhenish Symphony.' And I'm happy to take my cue from the Music Director of the Berlin Philharmonic.

On paper, and in the mind, Schumann's Second Symphony registers as the most conventionally 'symphonic', its four movement groundplan - with a slow introduction breaking into an Allegro trot – putting you in mind of the first two Beethoven symphonies or of Haydn. And as I began to reacquaint myself with Schumann's symphonic world, I pondered how a composition that felt instinctively unified melodically and

> motivically could also sound an answer.

so disparate and varied, like each movement acting as a standalone character piece (not that you would necessarily want that). Holliger provides

'The first and second movements,' he tells me, 'have the same metronome mark of crotchet=144, and the slow movement is nearly half; then the finale is in a very fast one-beat-per-bar, but still you feel like each bar matches the beat of the slow movement. The whole symphony is in one, like the conception of Mendelssohn's Scottish Symphony.' Holliger explains how the music is glued together throughout by a four-note cell, but I ask him to tell me about the music's disunity. Am I right to hear each movement orbiting independently too, in a way that is uniquely Schumann? Holliger alludes to Bernd Alois Zimmermann, the composer of *Die Soldaten*, *Photoptosis* and Requiem für einen jungen Dichter, who died in 1970, and who was famous for pieces that made liberal use of collage and knitted together layers of borrowed material. 'He was fascinated by the idea of Kugelgestalt – that time is like a ball, and all times of all centuries are focused in one single point. I think Schumann understood this too. You ask about the Second Symphony – well, the beginning could be like 17thcentury polyphony and then, suddenly, it looks 120 years or more into the future. You feel this composer knows the whole history of music.'

The Second Symphony's Scherzo has something of the lightness of Mendelssohn's A Midsummer Night's Dream, Holliger explains as he tells me about those angels and demons, 'but is relentless, a diabolic dance, in the mood of ETA Hoffmann'. And that shockingly abrupt change of mood, the solo flute overtaken by a brutal march as the first movement of the First Symphony reaches its climax, is another characteristic Schumann moment. 'In the First Symphony the flute symbolises a butterfly which here is overwhelmed by very tragic music. Marches are a frightening thing. Send soldiers to kill, and you're asking them to stop thinking about what they are doing. Trills in Schumann, like the woodwind trills you

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'Trills in Schumann often tremor and

shiver like music with a high fever –

this is not the Baroque idea of a trill

as ornamentation' - Heinz Holliger

mention, often tremor and shiver like music with a high fever – this is not the Baroque idea of a trill as ornamentation.'

Holliger talks about the symbolism of instrumental identity in Schumann's music. In *Overture, Scherzo and Finale* a choir of three trombones appear suddenly like a premonition of the role they will take in the fourth movement of the *Rhenish*. 'When his brother Eduard was dying, Schumann woke up at three in the morning. He had been dreaming about three trombones, and later he learnt that his brother had died at 3am. Always in Schumann, three trombones is a message about death.' I mention that Rattle urged me to ask him about this same movement. 'Well, when I looked at the sketches, I realised that the tempo changes to double the speed two beats later than in the printed score – nobody ever does this, but the difference is essential.'

That Schumann had such specific ideas about orchestral colour and instrumental identity runs triumphantly contrary to that tired cliché about his orchestration being somehow inept and clumsy. In the September 2014 issue of *Gramophone*, Robin Ticciati revealed that, for him, the attraction of Schumann is precisely *because* the orchestration is so, as he put it, 'crazy'. 'It's also so controlled, and the palette is extraordinary. And I think when you get to a Schumann score, the first reaction is not to go, "What is all that?" but "What does he want?" and "What's important here?"' Ticciati hears clues about how Schumann ought to sound orchestrally in how he 'orchestrates' his piano music; and in the booklet-notes accompanying his cycle, Yannick Nézet-Séguin discusses how the defined attack and decay of modern trumpets help balance the orchestration.

And so Schumann wins. The consensus, circa 2014/15, is leave well alone. 'Schumann learnt lots about orchestration from Mendelssohn, the greatest orchestrator of his time,' Holliger explains, 'and he tried to have a very transparent sound in the orchestra. It's not that very heavy "German potato soup" sound. I never change a single note in any of the symphonies.' Rattle confirms that Schumann must be 'light and singing, or the sound can be too brittle – the key word is sostenuto.' The impulsive and spontaneous side of Schumann is also important to Rattle. 'The last symphonic music Schumann wrote was the Rhenish,' he says, 'and the fourth movement feels like Schumann falling apart, then the finale is an attempt to cradle him in a warm embrace. And for that to work, you can't micromanage too heavily.' Music to Schumann's ears, I suspect - a composer who clearly knew the value of spontaneity: 'My symphonies would have reached Opus 100 if I had but written them down,' he said. 'Sometimes I am so full of music, and so overflowing with melody, that I find it simply impossible to write anything.' 6

SCHUMANN SYMPHONIES ON DISC

The four conductors and their symphony cycles



Heinz Holliger WDR SO Audite (E) Vol 1: 97 677 (12/13), Vol 2: 97 678 (10/14), Vol 3: 97 679 (12/14)





Nézet-Séguin
COE
DG (M) (2)
479 2437GH (5/14)



Robin Ticciati
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Linn (2 2 2 CKD450
(9/14)



RECORDING REVOLUTION

WHEN HI-FI CAME OF AGE

As Decca releases a new box-set dedicated to its pioneering recordings from 1944-56, Mike Ashman charts the history of the post-war revolution in recording technology

ars are not favourable to delicate pleasures,' wrote JRR Tolkien in the essay collection A Secret Vice but, in respect of the makings of a revolution in sound recording during the Second World War, he was wrong. By the 1940s it had taken half a century for the gramophone record not to progress much from a fragile and inconveniently sized lump of shellac playing

at a seemingly vulnerable 78 revolutions per minute (and not always at precisely that speed!). As Roland Gelatt wrote of the disc in his history *The Fabulous Phonograph*: 'Its size and speed and grooving were no different from what they had been in 1903, when a four-minute operatic aria was considered the be-all and end-all of the phonograph's musical responsibilities.'

Additionally, one's enjoyment was hampered still by sound which – despite the important technical leap in 1925 from acoustic to electrical recording – was of limited brilliance and depth

and heard through an aural screen of noise from both the surface of the disc itself and from the needle playing it (a process, moreover, which actively shortened the reproductive life of both

needle and record). If the piece of music one listened to had a longer running time than that of a side (always in the case of a 'complete' symphony or an opera), one had also enforced pauses to change sides or wait for the changer to drop the next record in automatic sequence.

Yet, within less than four years of peace being declared, the gramophone public was able to listen to and purchase recordings – in markedly improved sound quality – which played, on unbreakable plastic, for up to 23 minutes per side. These long overdue, and now rapidly adapted, innovations were linked directly to technical discoveries made for the war effort.

The story focuses on one small firm and one brilliant young engineer-inventor. Arthur Haddy (1906-89) was an electrical engineer and inventor from the firm Crystalate – which was taken over by Decca together with its trademark West Hampstead London studios in 1937. He is affectionately remembered in *Putting The Record Straight* (the autobiography of John Culshaw, Decca's leading young trainee producer after the war) for his 'immense energy and vision' and 'willingness

to break any rule that did not fit his conception of how a job should be done. "Never mind the meter, boy!" said Haddy to an engineer anxiously watching his volume controls. "It's the sound we're after".' Haddy had been working since 1929 to improve amplifiers and develop disc cutters with lower distortion that could preserve high frequencies up to 7600Hz on a 78rpm disc. His new cutter (1938) was actually the

starting point of Decca's full frequency range recording (*ffir*).

When war came in 1939, all scientific and technical research was diverted for military purposes. Haddy's team was detailed to help the RAF record German night-fighter signals as well as their own signals for friendly anti-aircraft gunners to learn to recognise. Their technical requests became increasingly sophisticated. Next, Coastal Command wanted to distinguish between the sounds made by different country's submarines. 'That meant high fidelity and the

chance to conduct all necessary experiments under the best possible conditions,' explained Haddy in 1951. 'We went all out on it, in a way that probably would have taken years in peacetime'. They developed a

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ddy, engineer and inventor would have taken years in peacetime'. They developed a high-fidelity hydrophone capable of detecting and cataloguing individual German submarines by each one's signature engine noise, and enabled a greatly enhanced frequency range (high and low notes) to be captured on recordings. The recording

unit had a moving-coil driving element like Haddy's 1938 disc

cutter and was flat in frequency response from 40-14,000Hz.

At Decca, Haddy joined forces with recording engineer Kenneth Wilkinson (1912-2004), who was responsible for many of the revolutionary-sounding recordings reissued in the newly released 'Decca Sound – The Mono Years, 1944-56'. With Wilkinson, reported Culshaw, Haddy 'had first seen how the wartime experiments might lead to vast improvements in the recording and reproduction of music' – it was the chance at last to catch the entire sonority of an orchestra for homelistening by using the new disc cutters. They lost no time in trying the system out on a full-scale classical recording two days after D-Day in June 1944. (EMI, also as a result of diverting its technical resources to the war effort, launched a similar system to *ffir* which was used in a recording of Holst's



'We went all out with high fidelity, in a way that would have taken years in peacetime' - Arthur Haddy, engineer and inventor

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Britten leads the LSO in his Diversions for piano and orchestra with pianist Julius Katchen at Kingsway Hall in July 1954; the hall was one of Haddy's favourite recording venues

The Planets with Boult and the BBC SO in January 1945.)

Discographer and sound historian Mike Gray lists several reasons for Decca taking the lead in classical recordings. They were a small group of people not burdened by the bureaucracy of larger companies. They had no large fixed layout studio of their own to work in – West Hampstead was limited essentially to solo, chamber and pop – so had to find places, improvise and be mobile.

Their chosen venue for starters was London's Kingsway Hall – which Haddy deemed ideal because of its square shape, canted wooden floor, soft plaster walls and lack of concrete. (The orchestra could be placed on the floor to take advantage of equal reverberation via microphones from all sides – a favoured Haddy method which he was even to prefer, controversially, in halls like Amsterdam's Concertgebouw which were famous for their sound

Concertgebouw which were famous for their sou from the stage.) Kenneth Wilkinson dubbed the result 'a lovely sound'. Three omnidirectional condenser RK-2 microphones (originally built for film studios) were suspended above the violins, the winds, and the cellos and basses. Once basic volume levels were established, the Decca engineers left their mixers alone.

This first ffrr recording was of Sidney Beer's National Symphony Orchestra in Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony; further sessions in the next 12 months built up a Decca classical ffrr catalogue, using, at first,



An ffrr Gramophone advert, November 1952; an ffrr recording of Ansermet's Rite of Spring

British-based artists including Eileen Joyce, Moura Lympany, Kathleen Long and Ida Haendel with various London-based orchestras. The concept of *ffirr* was officially introduced in June 1945 with its soon-to-be well-known trademark 'ear', featured in full-page *Gramophone* advertisements in the immediate post-war years (see example, left).

In 1946, Decca began a significant classical expansion at home and abroad, making recordings with many younger and upcoming European artists. Ernest Ansermet came to London to record *Petrushka*; this was, as reported in Gelatt's *The Fabulous Phonograph*, an ideal work to test out a new recording method because of the score's 'growling noises, *sul ponticello* from the double basses, shrill cornet roulades...bizarre diversions by piano and celesta, and luminous climaxes from strings, winds, brass and percussion'.

(Capturing percussion properly, often the bête noire of early recording, was something of which Decca was now proud.) 'I have no hesitation in saying that this is the most sensational advance in recording we have had yet,' wrote Alec Robertson in *Gramophone* in June 1946. The Ansermet *Petrushka* was key in the development of *ffrr* and in alerting

the listening public to high fidelity. Critics commented on the startling realism of the new recordings, whose newly increased frequency range was 80-15,000Hz, with a signal-to-noise ratio of 60dB.

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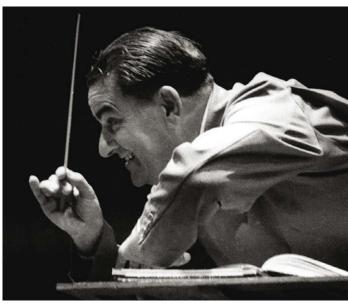
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WHEN HI-FI CAME OF AGE







Eduard van Beinum and the Concertgebouw recorded in Walthamstow Assembly Hall

The ffrr technique became internationally accepted and considered a standard.

Following Ansermet's lead (in Haddy's favourite Kingsway Hall), the Concertgebouw Orchestra under Eduard van Beinum came to London's Walthamstow Assembly Hall. Decca's recording gear was designed to be completely portable and soon followed its artists back to the Netherlands (van Beinum), Zurich (the pianist/would-be conductor Georg Solti), Geneva (Ansermet) and Paris (a whole catalogue of conductors ranging from Sir Adrian Boult to Erich Kleiber and Roger Désormière). Decca's ffir catalogue also started to have an impact overseas in the important American market, despite buyers initially having to purchase Decca-made reproducers, some of which cost nearly a year's salary at the time (in the case of the Decca Decola, £163 plus £43 purchase tax). America soon pioneered the idea of a domestic hi-fi system of separate components rather than unwieldy and less good-sounding compound unit.

Meanwhile, the Decca sound revolution was being augmented by developments in both recording materials and disc formats. According to Mike Gray, anyone who had bothered to read German technical magazines would have known about the Magnetophone and tape from the late 1930s. But the general discovery of why German studio broadcasts sounded so good had to wait for the Allies' wartime capture of Radio Luxembourg in September 1944 and the discovery of a Magnetophone tape machine that could record sounds up to 10,000 cycles, a fidelity equalling or surpassing the best contemporary phonograph records.

Further work by Allied companies developed tape as the new medium for capturing recorded music, another radical step forward in recording history which allowed takes of nine-to-10 minutes and the ability to correct mistakes by editing rather than starting again from scratch with a new wax or lacquer master take. Pretty much at the same time, American research for the Columbia Broadcasting System by engineer William Savory under Hungarian-born electrical engineer Peter Goldmark devised a recording head capable of cutting hair-width grooves consistently, a pick-up that would track them and an electronic equalisation system to compensate for loss of fidelity in the inner grooves of the new disc, which was pressed in non-breakable vinylite.

Columbia's President Edward Wallerstein had fought for a long time to be able to hear a whole symphonic movement on one side of a record without interruption. At a press conference in New York City in June 1948, he surrounded himself with a stack of 78s and a stack of new long-playing records, both containing the same amount of music; the stack of 78s reached nearly eight feet in height, while the stack of LPs was only just over 15 inches. His case to the press and commercial rivals was instantly made by playing the 78 version (four minutes until its mid-movement break) and the LP version (without break). 'The Voice of Frank Sinatra' and Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto with Nathan Milstein conducted by Bruno Walter became respectively the first LPs in the pop and classical categories.

Although Decca had not yet bought its first tape machine the company started immediately with the transfer of existing 78 recordings to LP. Its Heath Robinson methodology was described by Culshaw in Putting The Record Straight: 'The only way to make an LP from existing 78 records was to try to join one side to the start of the next, while the result was simultaneously recorded (or "cut") on a lacquer, revolving at 33 and a third rpm. It was a nightmare. I stood there with a score and began a countdown during the last 30 seconds of a side and then shouted "Drop!", at which point one engineer would fade out the side that has just ended while another, with luck, would lower the pick-up on the beginning of the next side. If anything went even slightly wrong there was nothing to do but go back to the beginning...To this day if I catch Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra or Rimsky-Korsakov's Sheherazade in the concert hall, it is all I can do to stop myself from leaping up and shouting "Drop!" at each familiar joining point.'

Nonetheless Decca soon had the tape (the BTR-1 and -2 recording machines from rivals EMI) to make both the manufacture of new recordings and the transfers of existing 78 material easier. This 'new' new age of recording – tape plus LPs – was launched once more by Ernest Ansermet and a new *Petrushka*, this time with his own Orchestre de la Suisse Romande (reissued on 'Mono Years'). 'It will become, I am sure, the first landmark in the history of LP,' wrote Lionel Salter in a July 1950 review next to a classic period advertisement for Keith Prowse featuring clock hands and the caption 'We sell the new Decca long-playing records'.

And once again Decca led the way, with rivals Columbia and HMV (subsidiaries of EMI) only coming to LPs in October 1952.

The move to LP encouraged another innovation by Haddy, which led Decca to start recording on longer 16-inch acetates, thus permitting longer side lengths to keep up with American competition. He would stay in the business with the company long enough to be an enthusiastic champion of stereo, the video disc and the beginnings of digital recording.

Decca soon became the first company to record in Europe in stereo (Ansermet again with Rimsky-Korsakov's Antar Symphony). Links with European companies at this time helped British recording companies avoid stringent exchange controls. Until 1975, Decca's Zurich-based boss Maurice Rosengarten paid for recording sessions in return for royalties. He also helped recruit artists like Ansermet, Solti (described by Decca's Raymond McGill as being 'lively from day one' in his recording sessions, which started, in London, with Haydn's Symphony No 100) and the Vienna Philharmonic, all of whom would assemble long discographies for the company.

One may think of Decca primarily as a recorder of large-scale works – symphonies and opera (the latter to be the subject of its own box later on) – but the repertoire of the 'Mono Years' leans in other directions to feature a range of instrumental soloists - Clifford Curzon, Wilhelm Backhaus, Julius Katchen, Pierre Fournier, Maurice Gendron - and varied repertoire. There are interesting helpings of chamber music by the Trio di Trieste, Végh Quartet and Vienna Octet. There are also performances of 20th-century repertoire. Of note are the start of the label's major Britten-dedicated series (here with the composer and van Beinum conducting orchestras from London, Denmark and the Netherlands), major Stravinsky (Ansermet's second Petrushka, coupled with The Rite of Spring) and a RVW symphony cycle under Boult. Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra, a Pijper symphony and Diepenbrock make an appropriate coupling under van Beinum and the Concertgebouw, as do Albéniz, Turina and Poulenc from Paris under the short-lived Ataulfo Argenta (another new Decca signing) and Boulez's inspiration Roger Desormière. Re-enhanced here are English repertoire standards (including Facade and Elgar/RVW string classics) under Anthony Collins. More mainstream symphonic repertoire is heard in Erich Kleiber readings (Beethoven's Sixth and Ninth), Knappertsbusch (Bruckner's Third), Krauss (Wagner excerpts) and van Beinum (partnering Curzon in still one of the stormiest, best-balanced accounts on disc of Brahms's First Piano Concerto).

In all, this latest Decca set captures the work of the artistic and engineering team which spearheaded a revolution in the sound-reproducing quality of the gramophone. It also showcases the point in history – of equal importance perhaps to the coming of the 'talkies' in cinema – at which the medium of recording became capable of more than just soundbites.

It could now properly represent the performance of classical music in its own length and time. 6 'Decca Sound - The Mono Years, 1944-56' is out now

THE RECORDING

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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

Recording of the Month

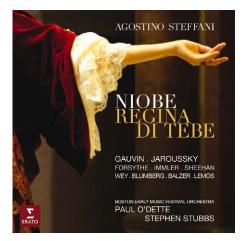
David Vickers listens to a recording of a 17th-century operatic discovery that really does it justice



Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra / Paul O'Dette, Stephen Stubbs

Erato ® 3 2564 63435-4 (3h 44' • DDD)

Agostino Steffani (1653-1728) is praised by scholarly cognoscenti as the missing link between Cavalli and Handel but opportunities to hear top-class performances of his works are much too rare. The discography has expanded gradually in recent years but his operas have not been championed as effectively as his masterful chamber duets (the undisputed model for Handel's similar duets) and his fine Stabat mater, sent in 1728 to London's Academy of Ancient of Music (he was their honorary president). Considering the manifold qualities of this unfairly neglected composer, even the most curmudgeonly early-music purist (like me) must concede that Cecilia Bartoli's recent flurry of glamorous oneoff recitals drawn from secular and sacred output has brought the composer to the attention of the mainstream. However,



'The peculiar fusion of Italian aria style and Lulliste French dance elements means that courtly dance is never far away'

for those who might have listened uneasily to Bartoli's albums (12/12 and 11/13) with an intermingled admiration for the composer and reservations about elements of the performances, the Boston Early Music Festival's masterful interpretation of *Niobe*, *regina di Tebe* is a vital breath of fresh air.

Those aware of Steffani's intriguing career path, from humble boy chorister in his native Padua to eventually becoming one of the pre-eminent Roman Catholic diplomats based in Germany, might usually associate his compositional career with the electoral court at Hanover (where he preceded Handel by a few years), but previously he worked for

over 20 years at the Bavarian court in Munich, where *Niobe, regina di Tebe* was first performed at the Salvatortheater on January 5, 1688. Luigi Orlandi's libretto is based creatively on a tale in Book 6 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The worldweary Anfione, King of Thebes, unwisely transfers power to his wife Niobe but her prideful insults to the gods cause them to destroy her 12 children; Anfione is driven to suicide and the grief-stricken Niobe turns to stone.

Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs co-directed a staged production of Niobe at the Boston Early Music Festival in 2011 and they have reconvened with a slightly different cast for this fantastic recording, produced in partnership with Radio Bremen. Aaron Sheehan portrays Clearte's hopeless love for Niobe with soft plaintiveness. Colin Balzer's valorous Tiberino has a more muscular timbre and his beloved Manto is sung enchantingly by Amanda Forsythe, some of whose arias feature woodwinds used to lovely effect. José Lemos sings the comic servant Nerea with relaxed wit and Christian Immler's blind seer Tiresia is calmly authoritative, even when treated abysmally by the arrogant Niobe. The villainous conspirators Creonte (Terry Wey) and Poliferno (Jesse Blumberg) are characterised with just the right blend of mischievous personality and musical poise.



Philippe Jaroussky as Anfione in the Boston Early Music Festival's 2011 production of Steffani's Niobe

Philippe Jaroussky sounds in his element when Anfione ensconces himself in his Palace of Harmony, where he sings softly mysterious music to invoke the circling spheres ('Sfere amiche'). In contrast, the king's eventual rousing to action in Act 3 requires Jaroussky to unleash a torrent of melismatic virtuosity ('Trà bellici carmi'). Karina Gauvin captures not only Niobe's haughty pride and capricious cruelty but also her sensuality, folly and gullibility; she is amusingly quick to believe she is loved by an infatuated Mars (in reality, the lustful Creonte in disguise). The tragic doom of

Anfione and Niobe takes place in gripping music that is broken off incomplete at their last breaths; he is unable to continue after stabbing himself ('Spira già nel proprio sangue', with chromatically descending strings), and the tormented Niobe feels herself turning to stone and cannot finish the emotive continuo aria 'Funeste imagini'.

The excellent orchestra is led from the front by the co-directing lutenists O'Dette and Stubbs, who bring to life the multifaceted score, whether it is bellicose trumpets and drums (the Sinfonia that begins Act 1 and also Creonte's victorious aria ending the opera), the French-style pastoral ballet at the end of Act 2, a plethora of delicate arias, or tastefully realised recitatives. The peculiar fusion of Italian aria style and Lulliste French dance elements means that a sense of courtly dance is never far away, even when the mood is occasionally required to be more confrontational or muscular. The performance is never forced but always emotive. The artistic directors prepared their performing edition from nine different sources, including the printed libretto which revealed additional ballet music was composed by Melchior d'Ardespin (1643-1717), the director of the Bayarian court orchestra; his dances are lost but suitable movements have been selected from two other operas performed at Munich in 1690. Similarly, a few small gaps in the surviving material of Steffani's music have been filled editorially, such as the Sinfonias that begin Acts 2 and 3. Steffani made lots of cuts in advance of the first performance but some material omitted from the Bostonian production has been reinstated for the Bremen recording. Decisions are explained with exemplary clarity in O'Dette's postscript to Colin Timms's expert essay. An exemplary testament of superb musicianship from all participants (orchestral and vocal) and evidence of the artistic good that can come from a healthy scholarly curiosity, this is a landmark event in Steffani's

much-deserved rehabilitation. **6**

Listening points Your guide to the recording's memorable moments

Disc 1 tracks 29-30: Dell'alma stanca... Sfere amiche

The reluctant king Anfione seeks refuge from the cares of state in a Palace of Harmony. The accompanied recitative features onstage viols, filled out subtly by recorders and strings from the pit (without plucked continuo), and the sublime aria 'Sfere amiche', in 6/4-time, uses hushed six-note contrary motion string figures to illustrate the circling planets.

Disc 1 track 41: Fiera Aletto

The villainous sorcerer Poliferno gloats as he prepares a secret assault on Thebes. One of the opera's clearest proto-Handelian moments, it is sung with plenty of spirit by baritone Jesse Blumberg.

Disc 2 track 26: Tu ci pensasti poco

Amanda Forsythe has impressed me in several

recent Baroque opera recordings and she delivers another stunning performance here as Manto. 'Tu ci pensasti poco' makes charming use of a woodwind trio of two oboes and a bassoon.

Disc 2 track 20: Dal mio petto o pianti uscite

Anfione bewails the sorcerous abduction of Niobe at the heart of Act 2. Philippe Jaroussky's sensitivity for melancholic melodiousness is supported ideally by gently stabbing strings and exquisite contrapuntal writing.

Disc 3 track 3: Non mi far pianger sempre

The hopelessly lovelorn Clearte also reacts with dismay to news of Niobe's abduction in 'Non mi far pianger sempre'. Aaron Sheehan's sweet high-tenor phrases are echoed beguilingly by gentle pastoral recorders.

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Orchestral



Guy Rickards on an orchestral portrait of Swede Britta Byström:

A beguilingly scored orchestral work, strong on atmosphere, with orchestration that makes it a study in timbre' > REVIEW ON PAGE 28



Richard Wigmore digests 2014's best CPE Bach releases:

'A thrilling anniversary tribute to one of the great originals of the 18th, or any, century'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 32

Beethoven

Violin Concerto, Op 61^a. Romances^a – No 1, Op 40; No 2, Op 50. Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus, Op 43 – Overture ^aLorenzo Gatto *Vi*7

Pelléas Chamber Orchestra / Benjamin Levy Ziq-Zaq Territoires (F) ZZT354 (63' • DDD)



Lorenzo Gatto is well equipped to play the Beethoven Concerto. His clear, ringing

tone, coupled with an ability to play the exposed high passages with pure intonation, are joined to an expressive, unmannered style that can transmit the work's grandeur and nobility. It's a shame, therefore, that this issue doesn't merit a wholehearted recommendation. The main trouble is the orchestral sound: whether because of the recording or due to balance within the band, the effect in *forte* is quite brash and unyielding, with trumpets often too loud and other sections, notably the string basses, given insufficient weight. The smaller orchestration of the Concerto's *Larghetto* and the two Romances sounds much more satisfactory and these are the most pleasing tracks of the programme.

In the Concerto's outer movements I was troubled by a certain lack of momentum, in particular by the time taken at the end of phrases. Isabelle Faust's recording with Abbado and the Orchestra Mozart takes very similar tempi but soloist and orchestra combine to give a buoyant sense of forward motion missing in this new performance. Another criticism is that the dotted rhythms in the Concerto's middle movement and in the First Romance in G are surely excessively detached; the Orchestra of the 18th Century and Frans Brüggen, accompanying Zehetmair, give an object lesson in playing these passages.

Despite these strictures, it's well worth hearing Gatto's strong, communicative performances and, in the Concerto, his splendid accounts of the Kreisler cadenzas. **Duncan Druce**

Vn Conc – selected comparison:
Faust, Orch Mozart, Abbado (3/12) (HARM) HMC90 2105
Vn Conc, Romances – selected comparison:
Zebetmair, Orch of the 18th Century, Brüggen
(4/99*) (DECC) 478 7436DC7

Beethoven

Piano Concertos - No 1, Op 15; No 2, Op 19 Louis Schwizgebel pf London Philharmonic Orchestra / Thierry Fischer Aparté (© APO98 (65' • DDD)



The Swiss-Chinese pianist Louis Schwizgebel (he has dropped the 'Wang'

portion of his name under which he recorded for Pan and Aparté – 11/13) has been attracting sustained attention and acclaim since coming second in the Leeds Piano Competition in 2012 and being appointed a BBC New Generation Artist the following year. For his debut concerto recording, he has bravely chosen the first two Beethoven concertos – presumably the rest will follow in due course – entering a very crowded field.

Schwizgebel is a fine pianist technically, with a keenly attuned sense of poetry. His shaping of the melodies in these two concertos is beautifully done and I liked his approach to No 2, the Cinderella of the Beethoven cycle, throughout. This is young man's music played that way and Schwizgebel's account fares well by comparison with those, say, of Aimard, Goode and Vogt. I will think more kindly of the work hereafter.

The First, commenced and completed between the two versions of No 2, requires a more mature expressivity and a performer of a little more experience to project its full array of drama as well as poetry. Schwizgebel – sensitively accompanied by the LPO and Thierry Fischer throughout the disc – produces a beautifully nuanced account with some nicely pointed detail but is perhaps a touch safe. Anderszewski's bold account is perhaps too driven but there

needs to be more darkness in the playing, such as we find in Andsnes and Goode, for example, or – top of the pile for me – Lewis. That said, with beautifully clear sound, this is a safely recommendable pairing. **Guy Rickards**

Pf Concs – coupled as above:

Vogt, CBSO, Rattle (3/97^R) (EMI) 556266-2, 602304-2

Aimard, COE, Harnoncourt (4/03) (TELD) 0927 47334-2

Goode, Budapest Fest Orch, I Fischer

(2/09) (NONE) 7559 79928-3

Lewis, BBC SO, Bèloblávek

(9/10) (HARM) HMC90 2053/5

Pf Conc No 1 – selected comparisons:

Anderszewski, Deutsche Kammerphilh Bremen (6/08) (VIRG) 502111-2 Andsnes, Mahler CO (11/12) (SONY) 88725 42058-2

Pf Conc No 2 – selected comparison: Andsnes, Mahler CO (6/14) (SONY) 88883 70548-2

Beethoven · Kurpiński

Beethoven Symphony No 3, 'Eroica', Op 55^a Kurpiński Grand Battle Symphony, Op 15^b Orchestra of the 18th Century / Frans Brüggen Fryderyk Chopin Institute © NIFCCD039 (68° • DDD)

Recorded live at the ^aWarsaw Philharmonic Concert Hall, September 3, 2005; ^bWitold Lutosławski Polish Radio Concert Studio, August 25, 2013



Two exceptional recordings taped eight years apart, both live: the *Eroica*

at the Warsaw Philharmonic Concert Hall in September 2005, the Kurpiński *Grand Battle Symphony* at the Witold Lutosławski Concert Studio of Polish Radio in August 2013. The Beethoven is conceptually similar to Brüggen's 2011 reading with the same orchestra, also recorded live and released as part of a complete Beethoven symphony cycle (Glossa). The principal difference is in the sound, which has a crisper edge in Warsaw, the result of a drier acoustic, which in turn influences (I would imagine) some swifter tempi, most specifically in the 'Marcia funebre'.

Brüggen's reading is very sensitively phrased, a noticeable difference between the two performances being in the sixth and seventh bars before the end of the March, played straight on the Warsaw performance (at 12'08"), but with a sudden unmarked accelerando on the linking phrase (at 13'21") in Rotterdam. It's an interesting if rather nervous-sounding gesture. Brüggen's *Eroica* is in effect a hybrid that takes on 'period' manners while honouring aspects of the interpretative 'old school'. Whether here, on Glossa or on his earlier Philips recording, Brüggen offers a reading that combines a sense of nobility with generally transparent textures. The firstmovement exposition repeat is played, as one might expect.

Karol Kurpiński's *Grand Battle Symphony* adds to a whole series of 'battle pieces' that are usefully catalogued by Krzysztof Bilica in his note, with Beethoven's *Wellington's Victory* bolstering the ranks during the following year. Kurpiński's highly colourful work – which, unlike Beethoven's, doesn't resort to canon salvoes – includes various dramatic incidents including a march-past by Napoleon's army and a vivid depiction of the battle itself. Brüggen directs a very exciting performance and the recording captures it with great presence. **Rob Cowan** *Beethoven – selected comparison:*

Orch of the 18th Century, Brüggen (11/88⁸) (DECC) 478 7436DC7 Orch of the 18th Century, Brüggen (1/13) (GLOS) GCDSA921116

Bruckner

Symphony No 3 (1873 version, ed Nowak)
Montreal Metropolitan Orchestra /
Yannick Nézet-Séguin
ATMA Classique (É) ACD2 2700 (67' • DDD)
Recorded live at the Maison Symphonique.



I came to Yannick Nézet-Séguin's Bruckner Third with his bravura Schumann

symphony cycle singing and dancing inside my head still, not as a direct point of comparison but as a barometer reading of his interpretative powers. I had also enjoyed the dramatic smack of his recent Bruckner Fourth; but this Third Symphony feels too much like Nézet-Séguin is letting the sand flow through his fingers as he tests the structural grain. He opts for Bruckner's original 1873 version, which is the longest stretch of music Bruckner would assemble, and you realise how finely nuanced the distinction can be between scale and

proportion. Bookended by Bruckner's labyrinthine and objectified slow movement and finale, the minuscule and homespun *Scherzo* has a tendency to leave our symphonic expectations short-changed by unbalancing the overall form. And I'm not convinced that Nézet-Séguin solves this fundamental formal dilemma.

Or perhaps he tries too hard. There is much to enjoy about the opening movement. The internal balance of the Orchestre Métropolitain strings, as those obsessive imitative quavers loop the loop, blends like porous clay, momentum accruing that flings Nézet-Séguin towards the first climactic *tutti* fanfare. Expedient dynamic control comes as standard: true *piano* leans towards truer *pianissimo* in the answering string phrase; and, when the opening material reappears, the structure, you think, locks into place.

The finale, too, achieves a flying start, but in both cases, just as Nézet-Séguin hits cruising altitude, structural turbulence makes you wish he'd kept his seatbelt on. Georg Tintner with the RSNO excels at expressing the finale's internal contradiction: a movement that proudly displays the time-bomb seeds of its own structural fragmentation as it hurtles forwards. But as Bruckner collapses the structure, Nézet-Séguin's flow becomes awkwardly lumpen as he tries with grim determination to shape the material. Peter Quantrill, in his review of Nézet-Séguin's Bruckner Eighth (5/10), likened progress to being walked around a Stations of the Cross inside a cathedral of sound; but now your ears stumble over untidy blocks of falling masonry. The slow movement is rudderless and the Scherzo feels oddly untailored. A problematic view of what, admittedly, could be Bruckner's most problematic score. Philip Clark

Bruckner

Symphony No 5 (1878 version) **Tapiola Sinfonietta / Mario Venzago**CPO
© CPO777 616-2 (60' • DDD)



Turn straight to the *Scherzo* of Mario Venzago's Fifth for a Ländler of

considerable charm and subtle clumsiness, albeit on a chamber scale with the 40-something players of the Tapiola Sinfonietta, based in the Finnish city of Espoo: they pull on the country clogs of Mahler's childhood Ländler-memories, not the more-or-less polished army boots of traditional performances.

Elsewhere, specifically wherever Adagio is marked, disorientation sets in: you'd be forgiven for thinking you'd bought an LP and set the turntable to 45, or even 78. Remember Robert Simpson's oft-quoted remark that Bruckner's music not only demands patience but embodies it? Venzago has no truck with that. Even so, the resemblance to Neeme Järvi's dash though the symphony is skin-deep. In the Adagio proper, the playing is consciously rustic to often touching effect; in the double fugue of the finale, I think they're just trying to keep up as Venzago hares from chorale post to cadence point like an over-zealous PE instructor. But if you have followed him this far, you'll certainly want to hear his final and most iconoclastic assault on the canon. One-in-a-bar Bruckner is bracing like a cold shower after a 10k run is bracing. One-in-a-bar Schubert, such as he argues for the Unfinished in his lengthy booklet apologia: that could be seriously interesting.

In almost every way Georg Tintner's rehearse-record performance with the London Symphony Orchestra at Maida Vale Studios in 1969 embodies the values against which Venzago has chosen to set himself. Testament's booklet contains an essay by Tintner's widow Tanya which is almost too candid: the conductor had never previously been afforded the chance to tackle the Fifth - indeed had only done the Fourth and Seventh in concert before and the orchestra had never played it. This is evident throughout but so is an innate grasp of Bruckner's symphonic architecture. The contrasting ideas of the first movement need the space that Tintner affords if they're not to crash into each other like a Cubist nightmare. To set the contrast between him and Venzago in plain terms, would Bruckner really write his lengthiest, most complex finale only to cap it with a village-band knees-up rather than a paean to the Almighty? Peter Quantrill Selected comparison:

LSO, Tintner (TEST) SBT1502

Bruckner

Symphony No 8 (1887-90 version, ed Haas)

Staatskapelle Berlin / Daniel Barenboim

Accentus (F) ACC202178; (F) ACC102178

(85' • NTSC • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo •

0). Recorded live at the Philharmonie, Berlin,

June 26, 2010



At the turn of the year the BBC broadcast a radio series on Magna Carta which took the Scherzo of the Eighth for its theme tune, and this concert performance shares something of that document's freewheeling, improvisatory magnificence. It also holds together better than a concert given by Barenboim and the orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall around the same time, though that may partly be due to the Philharmonie's greater suitability as a Bruckner acoustic. The crushing dissonances of the first movement have a rounded weight here that they lacked in London, making the pulse firmer and the movement's death-clock denouement more telling.

The broad outline of the interpretation may be familiar from the conductor's previous recording, made in the same hall with the Philharmonic 20 years ago (Teldec, 2/96), but the principal differences lie as they should, in the corporate personalities of the two Berlin orchestras: the strings and brass of the Staatskapelle are less massive, more transparent, so that the woodwind decorations in the Scherzo don't force their way to prominence. Likewise, Barenboim's bacchantic charge through the finale's coda is not so peremptory, with marginally less weight to the timpani and more sense of dancing ecstasy, even if catharsis is still elusive: as in Christian Thielemann's concert film with the Dresden Staatskapelle (C Major, 8/14), the dominant tone of the interpretation is less tragic than celebratory, even in the supple paragraphs of the Adagio's lament where both men adopt a flowing basic tempo, though Barenboim presses forward where Thielemann hangs back to admire the view rather than search any souls.

Anyone as persistently irritated as I am by menu music will find this example especially egregious: barely 10 seconds elapse between a chunk of the *Adagio* and Barenboim raising his baton to open the symphony. **Peter Quantrill**

Brun

Symphony No 4. Rhapsody

Moscow Symphony Orchestra / Adriano
Guild ® GMCD7411 (57' • DDD)



'It is not my favourite amongst my symphonies. For the first time, I felt the

music of Bruckner "distracting" me; it overcame me and I found it hard to resist its influence.' Thus Lucerne-born composer and conductor Fritz Brun (1878-1959) on the Fourth of his 10 symphonies, in a correspondence with Hermann

Scherchen dated October 1, 1939. Brun had completed the work 14 years previously; Volkmar Andreae gave the world premiere in Zurich's Tonhalle on February 1, 1926. Lasting some 47 minutes, it's in three movements, the first of which (marked Poco mosso, con tranquillità) assigns a prominent role to the horn very much in the mould of Bruckner's Romantic Symphony and whose blissful progress seems to mirror the breathtaking landscape around Morcote on Lake Lugano in the Swiss canton of Ticino where it was conceived. Next comes a scherzo in all but name, whose agitated, even irascible outer portions contrast pleasingly with the nobly contemplative Adagio sostenuto at its heart. The extended finale serves up plenty of satisfyingly knotty dialogue, before tying together the threads for an exuberant payoff. Stylistically, there are nods towards Bruckner, Mahler and Franz Schmidt; intriguingly, Brun's orchestration has something of the craggy individuality of Havergal Brian's. The very late Rhapsody (1957) comprises an amiable 10-minute score of no great consequence. Like the symphony, it suffers from a dearth of what I would term truly distinctive inspiration.

The composer's countryman, Adriano, secures a plucky response from his Moscow band, but neither the orchestral playing nor slightly dry recorded sound represent exactly the last word in refinement. Diehards will doubtless want to acquire this; others should proceed with caution.

Andrew Achenbach

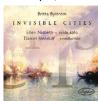
Byström

Picnic at Hanging Rock^a. A Walk After Dark^b. Invisible Cities^a

^bEllen Nisbeth va ^aMalmö Symphony Orchestra; ^bSwedish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Daniel Blendulf

Daphne © DAPHNE1046 (67' • DDD)

BRecorded live at Berwaldhallen, Stockholm,
February 15, 2014



I first encountered Britta Byström's music on Phono Suecia's fascinating CD

('Persuasion', from her 2004 orchestral piece after Jane Austen) that featured works written between 1996 and 2007. This new disc contains three more recent works. Earliest is *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (2010), which Byström styles a tone-poem, drawing its inspiration from Peter Weir's iconic film. It is a beguilingly scored orchestral work, strong on atmosphere (like Weir's film), with fantastical orchestration that

makes it a study in timbre. The piece won the Christ Johnson Prize in 2012.

Byström's music is much involved with the nature of sound and if there is a criticism of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* it is that her attention to detail sacrifices a little in terms of structure. Despite being of similar size, this is a failing neither of the other works here exhibit. The viola concerto A Walk After Dark (2013) is a superbly scored and cogently argued work in six sections, playing continuously, where form and content are held in a nice balance. Dedicated to the memory of her former teacher, Anders Eliasson (1947-2013), A Walk After Dark is full of psychological light and shadow. So, too, is Invisible Cities (2013), inspired by Calvino's novel, its recurring piano refrain – lifted from Lutosławski's 7eux vénitiens – a guiding light through the work's 11 sections, several of which have a haunting nocturnal feel.

Daniel Blendulf directs three splendidly committed accounts from the Malmö and Swedish Radio Symphony orchestras, and Ellen Nisbeth – for whom *A Walk After Dark* was written – is a model soloist. Daphne's sound is excellent and so is this disc. **Guy Rickards**

Dutilleux

Métaboles. Symphony No 1.
Sur le même accord^a

^aChristian Tetzlaff vn
Orchestre de Paris / Paavo Järvi
Erato © 2564 62424-4 (57' • DDD)



This admirable disc highlights a pair of French orchestral works from the 1960s

which might once have seemed pallid and conservative when compared to the scintillating radicalism on offer from Messiaen, Boulez and Xenakis at the same time. Yet what comes across today from these brilliantly vital accounts recorded in 2012-13 is the emotional diversity and effortless intensity which Henri Dutilleux could achieve without embracing the modish trappings of mid-20th-century progressiveness. Even when evoking Dukas or Honegger, this is music that consistently projects a persuasive and thoroughly unhackneyed manner.

Born in 1916, Dutilleux was already in his forties when he completed his First Symphony in 1961. It's true that the first and last of its four movements both lapse briefly into earnestness as they search for an appropriately weighty mode of



Long-haul Bruckner: Yannick Nézet-Séguin and his Montreal players tackle the longest stretch of music the composer would assemble (review on page 27)

expression. Yet such moments count for little with material that avoids any hint of soft-centredness, and Dutilleux even brings off an unusually quiet ending to the finale. Add in a *scherzo* that out-dazzles *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* and an intermezzo that is anything but lightweight, and you have a modern symphony of rare distinction.

Written soon after, the five short and highly diverse character pieces that comprise *Métaboles* provide a more concentrated version of the symphony's expressive range and formal qualities. Both scores are performed with relish by Paavo Järvi and an Orchestre de Paris on top form. This acoustically admirable disc also includes a brief and much later piece, *Sur le même accord* for violin and orchestra (2001-02). Though described as a 'nocturne', there is nothing soporific about this forcefully delineated music, a perfect miniature music drama. **Arnold Whittall**

Francesconi

Inquieta limina. Piano Concerto^a.

Cobalt and Scarlet

^aNicolas Hodges pf Remix Ensemble and

Symphony Orchestra of the Casa da Música,

Oporto / Peter Rundel, Jonathan Stockhammer,

Takuo Yuasa

Casa da Música (F) CDM022 (50' • DDD)

EUCA
FRANCESCONI
ORQUESTRA SINFÓNICA
REMIX ENSEMBLE
CASA DA MÚSICA
LIVE RECORDINGS

Last year should have seen the 50-something Luca Francesconi break through in the

UK. Instead his violin concerto, *Duende*, failed to make the BBC Proms when soloist Leila Josefowicz took time out to give birth, and an opera, *Quartett*, enjoyed distinctly mixed notices at Covent Garden's Linbury Theatre. The provocative depravity of the latter's take on *Les liaisons dangereuses* obscured for many the vital swirl of its musical invention. If Berio remains the major influence on his sometime assistant, the present clutch of live recordings made during his tenure as composer-in-residence at Oporto's Casa da Música holds out the prospect of mainstream acceptance.

Cobalt and Scarlet (2000) has been a calling card. Although its opening reverie would seem to have been pared back since Hannu Lintu's all-Finnish recording for BMG Ricordi, the piece retains sufficient cinematic sweep and rhythmic drive to please admirers of Magnus Lindberg or the John Adams of El Dorado. The new performance is certainly enthusiastic, albeit less polished than its Finnish

predecessor (there is, or was, another alternative under Roberto Abbado for Stradivarius). The acoustic is a little tight, straining to accommodate its epic sound and skyscape, in which the gradual predominance of sunlight over the dark cobalt of dawn is evoked by the advent of rhythm, dragging the orchestra towards Dionysian dance. Just before the end, a deliberate 'steal' from *The Rite of Spring* should bring you up short.

Berio is a palpable presence in *Inquieta limina* (1996), its smaller forces enlivened by the presence of an accordion. Again there is competition, this time from Reinbert de Leeuw on the Etcetera label. The novelty is Francesconi's coruscating Piano Concerto (2013), composed for and here premiered by Nicolas Hodges. Both invigorating and exhausting, it attests to the keen virtuosity of its protagonist. Plainly Francesconi's remarkable ear for colour persists, along with a scarcely unique tendency to let things run on a bit. Only the over-intellectualised accompanying texts may disappoint. **David Gutman**

Haydn · Gluck

'Haydn 2032 - No 1, La Passione' Gluck Don Juan (original version) Haydn Symphonies - No 1; No 39;





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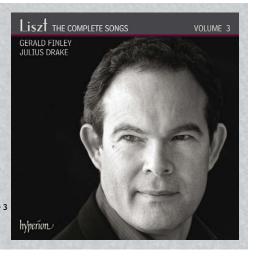
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No 49, 'La Passione' Il Giardino Armonico / Giovanni Antonini Alpha (©) ALPHA670 (71' • DDD)



Gluck is never likely to be mistaken for one of the 18th century's great

melodists. He will be remembered, though, as one of the godfathers of *Sturm und Drang*, the newly dramatic instrumental language that swept through the continent's symphonies from the mid-1760s. His ballet *Don Juan* meanders along fairly amiably for almost 20 minutes, only for the horses to be well and truly frightened in the last number, in which Don Juan is taunted by the Furies and dragged down to the Underworld. Suddenly the pleasant *galanterie* falls away to be replaced by minor-key tonality, shuddering and scything strings, braying horns, harsh dissonances and extremes of dynamic.

Haydn was among the first to pick up Gluck's gauntlet in his G minor Symphony, No 39 (1765), notable not only for this new vocabulary (which must have made the Esterházys spit their afternoon tea across the ballroom) but also for the presence of four rather than the usual two horns. His example spread like wildfire, inspiring G minor, horn-dominated symphonies by JC Bach, Vanhal, Ordoñez and even Mozart (K183). Giovanni Antonini and Il Giardino Armonico play this music for all its worth, with super-accurate violin work in fast scalic passages, wailing oboes and, of course, horns given headroom to pierce through the texture.

Symphony No 39 was far from a one-off in Haydn's output: No 49 from around three years later is in the even more austere key of F minor and only allows the balm of F major to be felt briefly in the Trio of the Minuet. This is a *sinfonia da chiesa*, opening with a whole slow movement before proceeding with a nervy *Allegro*, then the Minuet and finale. As if to remind us of more innocent times, the disc concludes with Haydn's First Symphony, composed some time during the late 1750s, its three movements and 'Mannheim *crescendo*' barely hinting at the great things to come over the ensuing half a century.

No 39's slow movement is perhaps a notch too fast for some; both Minuets too. A harpsichord chunters away in the background of No 1 (and there's an odd noise, like someone's leg falling off, at 3'11" in the first movement). This is the first in a series devised to '[shed] new light on [Haydn's] symphonic output through a

dialogue with other composers'. On the evidence of this tautly played and imaginative programme, further instalments will be eagerly awaited.

David Threasher

Joubert · Simpson · Wright

'British Cello Concertos'

Joubert Concerto in Two Movements, Op 171
Simpson Cello Concerto Wright Cello Concerto
Raphael Wallfisch VC BBC National Orchestra of
Wales / William Boughton

Lyrita ® SRCD344 (71' • DDD)



Here's an exceedingly welcome anthology from Lyrita. Set down in Cardiff's Hoddinott

Hall over three days in December 2013, it features premiere recordings of three cello concertos of uncommon eloquence, compelling rigour and genuine staying power. Each was fashioned for (and two bear a dedication to) that indefatigable champion of British music, Raphael Wallfisch, whose characteristically assured and deeply felt advocacy is matched by a lively and committed response from the BBC National Orchestra of Wales under William Boughton.

John Joubert (who turns 88 on March 20) completed his masterly Concerto in Two Movements for cello and chamber orchestra in 2011. It's an urgently expressive, impeccably crafted and entrancingly resourceful canvas, full of sharply memorable invention, and whose combination of songful ardour and lucidity of thought put me in mind of Kenneth Leighton. Scarcely less invigorating is the concerto by Christopher Wright (b1954). Cast in three linked movements, it's a gutsy, tersely argued and strongly communicative creation that grew out of the composer's instinctive reactions to the summer riots in England during August 2011; admirers of Richard Arnell (Wright's composition teacher) and William Alwyn should lose no time in making its acquaintance. The disc's substantial centrepiece comprises Robert Simpson's exceptionally powerful 1991 concerto. This proved to be his final orchestral offering and takes the shape of a theme and 11 variations; rest assured, the sublimely organic, typically questing and effortlessly inevitable way that Simpson handles his nourishing material makes for riveting listening. Vivid sound and helpfully detailed annotation by Paul Conway add to the considerable appeal of this rewarding issue. Andrew Achenbach

B Kelly

Left Bank Suite. Epitaph for Peace. A Christmas Celebration. Concertante Dances. Globe Theatre Suite^a. Nativity Scenes. Tango

^aJohn Turner rec

Royal Ballet Sinfonia / Barry Wordsworth Heritage (F) HTGCD285 (76' • DDD)



Born in 1934, Bryan Kelly was a composition pupil of Herbert Howells and

Gordon Jacob at the Royal College of Music, where he won a number of prizes, among them a travel scholarship which allowed him to study briefly in Paris with Nadia Boulanger. Happy memories of this French sojourn bubble up to the surface in the disarmingly tuneful and deftly sculpted Left Bank Suite, a 1960s commission for the BBC Concert Orchestra and the effervescent curtain-raiser on this generous Heritage survey. Originally composed for organ in 1966, the evocative and touching Nativity Scenes is performed in Kelly's own expert 2011 orchestration. Tango for strings dates back to Kelly's student days, whereas Concertante Dances wears an altogether more harmonically astringent, rhythmically spry demeanour.

We also get two works from 2013: the Remembrance Day elegy for strings entitled Epitaph for Peace; and A Christmas Celebration, a five-movement carol suite designed as a sequel to Kelly's own popular Improvisations on Christmas Carols. Flautist Atarah Ben-Tovim edited the Globe Theatre Suite for recorder and strings from 2005, a sequence of eight dance miniatures akin to Warlock's Capriol Suite. John Turner is the nimble soloist here, and Barry Wordsworth and the Royal Ballet Sinfonia tender spickand-span support; indeed, the playing throughout is commendably alert, and the sound agreeably clean to match. Altogether, a very likeable compendium.

Andrew Achenbach

Korngold

Violin Concerto, Op 35a. Violin Sonata, Op 6b Kristóf Baráti m^b Gábor Farkas pf^a South Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra / Otto Tausk Brilliant Classics ® 95006 (76' + DDD) aRecorded live at the Muziekgebouw, Eindhoven, January 24, 2014



Whenever a new recording of the Violin Concerto by Korngold comes up for review,

GRAMOPHONE *Collector* CPE BACH HIGHLIGHTS

Richard Wigmore picks the most comment-worthy discs from a bumper crop of 2014 releases celebrating CPE's tercentenary



Celebrating CPE: Christina Landshamer and Hans-Christoph Rademann reconstruct a 1786 Hamburg concert

ompeting with Gluck, Rameau and Richard Strauss, JS Bach's most famous son was always going to struggle for anniversary recognition in the concert hall. On disc, though, Carl Philipp Emanuel has never had it so good, with a plethora of tercentenary releases, plus a gargantuan 30-disc box-set of (mainly) reissues from Brilliant Classics and a substantial commemorative set from Warner. The Brilliant Classics set embraces virtually every aspect of Emanuel's oeuvre, including symphonies, concertos, swathes of chamber music, a selection of keyboard sonatas, songs and sacred choral music (like his father, he never touched opera). While performance quality inevitably varies, if you fancy plunging headlong into CPE's vast and varied output, you won't be disappointed.

Highlights include the six sets of Bach's last and greatest keyboard collection, the sonatas, rondos and fantasias that make up the *Sonaten für Kenner und Liebhaber* (ie for connoisseurs and amateurs, in the literal sense of the word) which the composer, ever a shrewd business operator, reported 'sold like hot cakes'. These are sympathetically played by **Pieter-Jan Belder**, alternating between Bach's own favoured instrument, the silvery, intensely private clavichord, and the newly fashionable fortepiano.

By the 1770s, when he composed most of these keyboard works, Emanuel had

acquired a reputation for 'bizarrerie', for the outlandish and disorienting, and for probing the limits of the *empfindsamer* Stil, the mid-century cult of 'sensibility'. Yet alongside his 'far-fetched and fantastical' (as one contemporary put it) keyboard works, Bach produced reams of chamber works in a more compliant idiom, partly to satisfy the tastes of the flute-playing Frederick the Great, his employer from 1741 to 1768. Yet galant euphony by no means excludes Bach's characteristic wayward inventiveness. As a representative sample of his chamber music, try two newly recorded discs in the Brilliant Classics box that are also available separately. One pairs violinist Federico Guglielmo and harpsichordist Roberto Loreggian in assorted sonatas and a pounding, percussive Sinfonia. The gem here is the B minor Sonata of 1763, with a tortuous opening movement full of CPE's trademark edgy virtuosity and a touching empfindsamer slow movement. Guglielmo and Loreggian play with fine style and spirit, as do flautist Laura Pontecorvo and the **Helianthus Ensemble** on a disc of works with transverse flute. These range from an early trio sonata of 1731, when Bach was just 17 (father Sebastian an audible influence here), to the Classically oriented quartets of his final year, 1788, whose sportive finales have more than a whiff of Haydn.

More consistent in performance quality than the Brilliant box is the

13-disc CPE Bach Collection from Warner, centring on symphonies, concertos and the 'Prussian' and 'Württemberg' sonatas. Gustav Leonhardt's performances of the four late Hamburg symphonies (Wq183) with the OAE vividly realise the music's bold, impassioned rhetoric and penchant for startling harmonic coups. Anner Bylsma has the measure of Bach's Empfindsamkeit in the three popular cello concertos while Bob van Asperen catches both the coruscating brilliance and the rapt inwardness of the sonatas. The Warner collection also includes Philippe Herreweghe's fine performance of the Resurrection oratorio Die Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt Jesu, with a first-class solo team lead by Hillevi Martinpelto. True to the Age of Sensibility, this is a work of reflection rather than action. But there are thrilling moments, including a thunderous bass aria and an apocalyptic final chorus.

Hänssler has bitten the bullet with the first-ever integral set of CPE's keyboard works: 26 discs' worth of quirkily inspired, often deeply moving music played with consummate understanding on a modern piano by **Ana Marija Markovina**. Some of the more introspective sonatas and rondos seem to cry out for the clavichord's confiding secrecy. Yet misgivings are silenced by Markovina's combination of fastidious judgement (of touch and, not least, of tricky-to-gauge rubato) and spontaneous fantasy, whether in the fiery, rhetorically extravagant 'Prussian' and 'Württemberg' sonatas or the brooding F sharp minor Freie Fantasie, Emanuel's solo swansong. As the composer demanded in his own writings, she knows how to balance eloquent vocal cantilena with subtle, speechlike inflections. With comprehensive annotation, this magnificently played set is surely the most impressive single Bach anniversary offering.

In Vols 27 and 28 of his ongoing CPE keyboard intégrale for BIS, Miklós Spányi makes a generally persuasive case for the clavichord, though the instrument – more sonorous than any clavichord I have encountered live – seems magnified by the ultra-resonant acoustic. Spányi rates the sonatas Wq51 and Wq52 as 'belonging to the summits of Bach's large oeuvre'. I wouldn't place them quite so high, though there are splendid movements such as the tonally adventurous finale of Wq52/2 and the darkly ruminative Adagio assai of Wq52/1 where Spányi exploits the clavichord's unique Bebung effect - a vibrato created by varying the pressure on the key. My only real quibble is that

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Spányi can be too expressively yielding in faster movements, unlike Markovina, who always maintains a strong forward momentum. The cussed Allegro di molto of Wq51/6, for instance, here emerges as a halting, self-questioning Moderato.

Spányi also features on the latest disc in BIS's survey of CPE's complete keyboard concertos that juxtaposes an early work for two harpsichords with the capriciously inventive double concerto for the oldmeets-new pairing of harpsichord and fortepiano, composed months before his death. In the concert hall the harpsichord tends to win hands down. No such balance problems in this delightful, quick-witted performance, with Spányi and fortepianist Tamás Szekendy audibly relishing the outer movements' impish raillery.

A clutch of other recommendable anniversary concerto discs include sinewy, lean-toned performances of the three cello concertos from Konstantin Manaev, complete with wacky, time-warp cadenzas that distort CPE through a modernist prism; and assorted works for flute, cello and oboe, with superb soloists in Jan De Winne (flute), Emmanuel Balssa (cello) and Marcel Ponseele (oboe). The oboe concerto, Bach at his most suavely ingratiating, is deliciously performed.

In the choral works Bach produced in Hamburg from 1769 onwards, the subjectivity of Empfindsamkeit can be diluted to anodyne sentimentality, typical of the period. Not even the oratorio Die Israeliten in der Wüste wholly escapes this charge. But it has many memorable moments, especially in the imploring, appoggiatura-laden music of Moses and the thirsting Israelites in Part 1 (CPE always does melancholy better than cheerfulness). With fine solo and choral singing, the carefully shaped and nuanced new recording from Frieder Bernius eclipses the more variably sung performance directed by William Christie (Harmonia Mundi, 9/90). Welcome, too, is Hartmut Haenchen's world premiere recording of the Passion oratorio Die letzten Leiden des Erlösers, with excellent work from the RIAS Kammerchor and the limpid soprano of Christina Landshamer. While the text is 18th-century religiosity at its most maudlin, Bach's music does indeed 'touch the heart', leavening reflectiveness with dramatic numbers.

Hans-Christoph Rademann's Harmonia Mundi recording that reconstructs part of CPE Bach's famous 1786 Hamburg charity concert deservedly carried off a Gramophone Award. You can experience a recreation of the whole concert on a DVD filmed,

unfussily, in Berlin's Konzerthaus. The aged Bach sought to present a conspectus of the 18th century's finest choral music from a north German perspective. Few would argue with his choice: the Credo from his father's B minor Mass and numbers from Messiah, his own Janusheaded Magnificat of 1749 and his vocal swansong, the stunning 'Heilig' for double choir. Performances are consistently inspiriting, with Christina Landshamer again a radiant soprano soloist. The upshot is a thrilling anniversary tribute to one of great originals of the 18th, or any other, century. 6

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and they've been coming thick and fast recently, the original one recorded in 1953 with Jascha Heifetz as soloist continues to draw applause. Here we have another serious challenger in this live recording by Kristóf Baráti from Eindhoven's Muziekgebouw, coupled with a studio performance from the Budapest Music Centre of Korngold's early Violin Sonata.

Baráti shapes the Violin Concerto's phrases with the same poise as Heifetz but expresses more subtleties of tone colour and emotional inflections, being more engaged in the yearning second subject of the finale where Heifetz is simpler. Detail is everything. The lovely opening is delicately coloured by Baráti with a little rit on that first semiquaver figure, and a single bar on the violas marked piano espressivo with a diminishing hairpin is shaded to a fine degree by the conductor Otto Tausk. Baráti captures the fiery and yet mercurial character of the first movement's cadenza with some dazzling playing. The Romance that follows is as seductive an account as any, with the noctural passage from soloist and orchestra from fig 47 truly misterioso. The helter-skelter finale, deftly dispatched, is greeted enthusiastically by the audience though listeners at home should be alert to a momentary crackle on the right-hand side of the orchestra at 4'45" in. Korngold wrote that his Concerto was contemplated for a Caruso of the violin rather than a Paganini, adding that he was fortunate that the two were rolled into one in Heifetz, an encomium we can now bestow on Baráti.

The early Violin Sonata runs twice the length of the concerto and on first hearing seems a protracted and strenuous affair. However, the pianist Gábor Farkas never falters in dispatching the fearsome multiple chords abounding in all four movements and the duo make light of Korngold's dense textures, with the measured endings to the outer movements finely drawn. The balance between them is exemplary. Adrian Edwards *Vn Conc – selected comparison:*

Heifetz, Los Angeles PO, Wallenstein (10/62^R, 5/74^R, 4/89^R) (RCA) 09026 61752-2

Ligeti

Cello Concerto^a. Piano Concerto^b.

Mysteries of the Macabre^c

^bMarco Blaauw *lpt* ^aNicolas Altstaedt *vc* ^cAlberto

Rosado *pf* PluralEnsemble / Fabián Panisello

NEOS ® NEOS11013 (45' • DDD)



Of Ligeti's five concertos, the earliest is for cello, from 1966. It's also his least known, perhaps because the solo part doesn't attract star soloists, who find themselves primus inter pares within an ensemble of 14 instruments, leading them from silence through a rapt unfolding of a single note for the first few minutes. The second movement is far more overtly virtuoso though no less shadowy and muted in its way, and the NEOS engineers have found an excellent balance for Nicolas Altstaedt and his colleagues in the Italian PluralEnsemble, more eerily atmospheric than the DG recording (1/95) and more detailed than the German radio set-up for Siegfried Palm (RCA - nla). As the work's dedicatee and first performer, he makes as much of a concerto out of the piece as he can, whereas Altstaedt is almost (not quite) lost among the nocturnal flutterings of the second movement's variations.

The Piano Concerto demands a much more extrovert approach, and here Alberto Rosado is hard-working but restrained in both balance and temperament compared with Pierre-Laurent Aimard, especially in the second of his two recordings (Warner, 5/01). The members of PluralEnsemble evidently enjoy themselves in the riotous outer movements but Ligeti's fiendish polyrhythmic games come closer to organised chaos the more you can hear inside them, and on Warner the Schönberg Ensemble is under the masterful control of Reinbert de Leeuw here and in Mysteries of the Macabre, the wild showpiece extracted from Gepopo's arias in Le Grand Macabre. Now that Barbara Hannigan has stopped the show with the soprano version, this trumpet arrangement by Elgar Howarth has lost some of its anarchic force; but Marco Blaauw and the busy percussionists of PluralEnsemble make the central section swing, and Blaauw hisses his instructions (as Breughelland's chief of police) in English rather than the German on rival recordings by Peter Masseurs and Håkan Hardenberger. Peter Quantrill

Lindsay

'After the Snow'
Remembrance Suite. Vision Suite. Last Words
Musicians from the Royal Scottish
National Orchestra / Greg Lawson
Mozie ® MOZIEO60 (76' • DDD)



Well established as a composer for film and television, Malcolm Lindsay is increasingly

becoming known for his concert output – a representative selection of which features on this disc. Interestingly, the 10 pieces

have been grouped into three broader sequences. The first of these, Remembrance Suite, takes in the elegiac evocation of 'Jerusalem' for strings and the increasingly ominous demeanour of 'Remembrance' for orchestra; between these comes a poignant 'Kyrie' for six voices - before the concluding piano trio, 'After the Snow', opens out the expressive range with its often plangent interplay. The second sequence, Vision Suite, starts with the orchestral impetus of 'Rising Sun' (written to precede a performance of Holst's The Planets); and if the ensuing 'My Duty' for strings is too generalised in emotion to match the words of Martin Luther King laminated on to the texture, the pulsating sombreness of 'Watkins' - its deft fusion of clarinet and electronics thrown into relief by the emergence of sampled and spoken voices – provides an arresting close. The final sequence, Last Words, opens with a string orchestra arrangement of the string quartet Solitary Citizen, continuing with the more combative manner of the string quartet One White Horse, before resorting to massed strings for the calmer though by no means tranquil 'Grace Notes'.

Quality of performances throughout leaves no doubt as to these musicians' dedication to the composer's cause, while the presentation is unusually elegant and stylish. Those able to make allowance for the dogged earnestness of Lindsay's idiom should derive sustenance and not a little pleasure from this latest release on the enterprising Mozie label. Richard Whitehouse

Mahler



Symphonies - No 1ª; No 2, 'Resurrection'b b'Camilla Tilling sop b'Lilli Paasikivi mez b'Chorus of Bavarian Radio; b'NDR Chorus; Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra / Paavo Järvi

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Bonus: 'Paavo's Mahler'



Readers with long memories may recall that the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra was responsible for the first-

ever digital Mahler symphony cycle. Eliahu Inbal conducted for the Denon label and at the time the interpretations were generally admired. Something of their poise and sweetness endures in this new DVD and Blu-ray series in which the band is directed by its current chief, Paavo Järvi.

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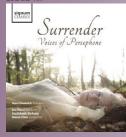


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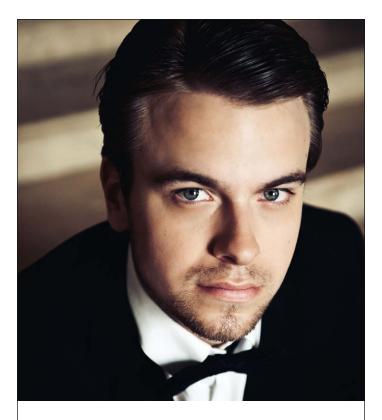
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Mozart: c-minor-Mass

Mozarteumorchester Salzburg / Matthew Halls **22nd July 2015** Salzburg Festival

Dates subject to change. Photo: Shirley Suarez.

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It is part of the sales pitch of this latest venture that each symphony has an introduction from the maestro, though I doubt that this will sway many potential buyers. Paavo is scarcely a communicator in the Bernstein mode. Nor does he display the scholarly awareness of Riccardo Chailly, today's brand leader in audiovisual Mahler chat. Recycling familiar arguments about Mahler's conflicted identity in a hostile world means refocusing on the music's sense of unease, yet the actual music-making here sounds oddly unruffled, the double bass solo that opens the First Symphony's slow movement being a case in point. At least Paavo doesn't deploy the whole section as favoured by some recent exponents. In short this is another anti-titanic First, laid-back and vernal rather than snowballing emotionally. You see the horns standing for the final peroration but just can't sense them going for broke. While the playing is often beautiful, the conductor's pernickety interventions rarely help to build longrange tension.

The Resurrection is more memorable and not just because Kloster Eberbach looks the part despite low-key camerawork. Lilli Paasikivi provides an eloquent account of the 'Urlicht', her relatively operatic presentation underpinned by stringent vocal control. Later on it's the usually excellent Camilla Tilling who seems below par, a little sharp in her exposed initial entry. Still, the finale's brazen offstage effects, such as the out-of-silence emergence of the choir, could scarcely be bettered. Competition is fierce, however. Those who can accept 1970s technology will find Bernstein at his most spectacularly OTT in Ely Cathedral (DG, 2/06), compared to which the present sleek, carefully shaded realisation feels almost cosy. Chailly's slightly antiseptic Leipzig option is a safer modern bet (Accentus, 1/12). David Gutman

Medtner · Scriabin

Medtner Piano Concerto No 3, 'Ballade', Op 60 **Scriabin** Piano Concerto, Op 20

Yevgeny Sudbin pf

Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra / Andrew Litton
BIS © BIS2088 (63' • DDD/DSD)



It's perhaps not surprising that Yevgeny Sudbin should be drawn

to Nikolai Medtner: both are Russian-born, both ended up in the UK. They also share a link with Germany, Medtner in terms of ancestry, Sudbin in his studies. Sudbin offers a characteristically thought-provoking pairing of Scriabin, cheerfully pointing out in his engaging booklet-notes that 'one could not possibly imagine the two becoming friends of any kind'.

The concertos here find Scriabin in youthful mode and Medtner near the end of his life. Heard 'blind' you'd never guess that Medtner's Third, which has an unconventional fantasia-like structure, dated from the Second World War. He was fundamentally a man born out of his time (the only reason, surely, why his music isn't much better known). Sudbin has found in Andrew Litton a wonderful comrade-in-arms and the characterisation offered by his Bergen Philharmonic is one of the pleasures of this recording. The interplay between pianist and orchestra is unfailingly chamber-musical and reactive. There were times when I wanted a greater degree of vehemence from the pianist (in the manner of Demidenko and - though he's hampered by a cloudy recording -Scherbakov), not least at the outset of the very brief 'Interludium'. In the finale, Demidenko's uncompromising drive gives this long movement real shape (and his way with the perky theme at 1'30" in is winning), though Sudbin is unfailingly felicitous and highly reactive, which brings its own rewards.

In his notes Sudbin warns against thinking of Scriabin's Piano Concerto as 'Chopinesque', though ironically it's these qualities that characterise his own reading, the filigree beautifully brought off. Their relatively broad tempo for the slow-movement theme (more generous than Dobrowen for Solomon) works because Litton brings out the felicities of Scriabin's scoring to such effect. And they surmount the challenges of the arguably over-extended finale, making light of the awkward rhythmic and textural shifts of gear. Solomon takes a different approach in his classic recording, steadier but rhythmically more strong-jawed. Add to this a finely detailed recording that puts Sudbin centre stage but not overly forward and you have a fascinating addition to the catalogue.

Harriet Smith

Scriabin – selected comparison:
Solomon, Philb Orch, Dobrowen (7/91^R) (EMI) 206102-2
Medtner – selected comparisons:
Medtner, Philh Orch, Dobrowen
(8/48^R, 4/94) (TEST) SBT1027
Demidenko, BBC Scottish SO, Maksymiuk
(4/92) (HYPE) CDA66580
Scherbakov, Moscow SO, Ziva (8/00) (NAXO) 8 553359

Mendelssohn

Symphonies - No 4, 'Italian', Op 90; No 5, 'Reformation', Op 107 The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra / Jan Willem de Vriend Challenge Classics (F) _______ CC72658 (69'• DDD/DSD)



Reviewing Jan Willem de Vriend's 2011/12 recording of Mendelssohn's Second

Symphony I concluded that, 'for a fresh, immediate statement that compels one's attention from start to finish, I cannot imagine anyone being disappointed by this new release'. Much the same might be said of these 2013/14 recordings of the Italian and Reformation Symphonies, both of them deeply musical and graced by a sense of unforced spontaneity, the Italian bounding in with ample energy though de Vriend sidesteps Mendelssohn's request that the coda of the first movement be played Più animato poco a poco (ie more liveliness, little by little), a decision I personally applaud as the direction so often sounds like an unnatural cue to hurry. I love the gentle blend of violins of flutes at 0'42" into the Andante con moto, the clearly delineated basses marking the movement's solemn procession. The third movement is admirably fluent, the closing Saltarello fast, deft and animated.

De Vriend opens the Reformation with an appropriate sense of repose and vivid brass crescendos, the 'Dresden Amen', suitably ethereal, the main Allegro doggedly emphatic and aptly played con fuoco. The scherzo trips along lightly; the Andante wears a fragile demeanour with next to no vibrato from the strings. I love the noble accumulation of woodwind and brass choirs leading to the closing Allegro, the bridge passage underpinned by prominent timps, the finale itself doubling tempo excitedly. I have to say that here I prefer Zehetmair and Norrington, both of whom manage a more seamless transition, though de Vriend and his players achieve genuine grandeur for the symphony's exultant close. Above all I like the sound of this coupling, its supple textures, though essential dynamics are never compromised. Good, sensitive performances these, recommendable save for the *Reformation*'s finale – though, as I wrote when reviewing Zehetmair's recording, whether his and Norrington's approach marks the maestoso's arrival quite in the way that Mendelssohn envisaged is open to discussion.

Rob Cowan

Reformation Sym – selected comparisons: Musikkollegium Winterthur, Zehetmair (4/14) (MDG) MDG901 1814-6 Stuttgart RSO, Norrington (HANS) CD93 132

Mozart

Five Violin Concertos.
Sinfonia concertante, K364a
Rachel Barton Pine vn aMatthew Lipman va
Academy of St Martin in the Fields /
Sir Neville Marriner
Avie (M) ② AV2317 (147' + DDD)



'Youthful music of yearning...imbued with an innocent utopianism, a faith

in perfectability, beauty, and sensual fulfilment' was Mozart biographer Maynard Solomon's verdict on the five violin concertos. To which I would add a coltish delight in the novel and unexpected - a side of the teenage Mozart's persona vividly realised by Andrew Manze (Harmonia Mundi) and Pekka Kuusisto (Ondine) in Nos 3-5, and Giuliano Carmignola (Archiv) in the complete concertos. Technically superb, the American violinist Rachel Barton Pine is relatively cool and contained: fair enough, though for all the poise and precision of her playing, I rather missed a sense of impish, opera buffa collusion between soloist and orchestra in movements such as the finales of Nos 1 and 3. That said, there is much to enjoy in Barton Pine's sensitive, finely honed performances, especially of Nos 4 and 5 (plenty of temperament in the latter's 'Turkish' eruption). With a nod to period performance, she articulates crisply and uses vibrato modestly. Marriner, who must have conducted more Mozart than anyone alive, and the ASMF are urbanely attentive in support - though oboes and (especially) horns are too discreetly blended into the tutti sonorities for my taste.

In the Elysian slow movements of Nos 3-5 Barton Pine draws a pure, chaste line and shades her phrases gracefully. Other violinists, including Manze and James Ehnes (CBC), have found more of Maynard Solomon's yearning and 'sensual fulfilment' in this music. But Barton Pine's straighter approach is never less than affecting. She is imaginative in her improvised lead-ins and provides her own cadenzas, more musing than showy, with inventive touches like the anticipation of the finale's bagpipe drones in the firstmovement cadenza of No 3. In the Sinfonia concertante, the greatest instrumental work Mozart produced before he decamped to

Vienna, Barton Pine is well matched by the confident, full-toned viola of Matthew Lipman. This is another strong, direct performance, with Marriner ever alert to the music's darkly glowing sonorities. If the players, characteristically, stress elegance over exuberance in the contredanse finale, the C minor Andante is eloquent without Romantic exaggeration, its sorrowful phrases beautifully dovetailed by the soloists.

Richard Wigmore

Vn Concs - selected comparison:

Ebnes, Mozart Anniversary Orch
(7/06) (CBC) SMCD5238
Carmignola, Orch Mozart, Abbado
(9/08) (ARCH) 477 7371AH2
Vn Concs Nos 3-5 – selected comparisons:
P Kuusisto, Tapiola Sinfonietta, Mustonen
(3/04) (ONDI) ODE1025-2
Manze, English Concert (5/06) (HARM) HMU90 7385

Mozart

Recorded live

Piano Concertos - No 9, 'Jeunehomme', K271; No 12, K414 **Ekaterina Litvintseva** pf**Klassische Philharmonie Bonn / Heribert Beissel** Profil (© PH14047 (56' • DDD)



'There is little point in recording Mozart's most popular concertos for the

hundredth time,' the conductor Heribert Beissel disarmingly claims in one of the several booklet articles about this particular project. In context (and it's the same in the German and French versions), one assumes he means that other concertos (maybe the A major, K488, the D minor, K466, or the C minor, K491) are more popular than the two he has chosen for this disc with the Russian-born pianist Ekaterina Litvintseva, though the A major, K414, and the E flat major, K271 (the so-called *Jeunehomme*) are scarcely unknown to the catalogue.

To judge from all the booklet literature, you gather that this venture is the product of much more than a serendipitous meeting in the recording studio, and certainly one quality that comes through very clearly is the way in which the small ensemble formed by members of the Klassische Philharmonie Bonn is so closely attuned to the warmly shaped interpretative style of the pianist. The *tuttis* of K414 are light, lucid and discreetly pointed, to which Litvintseva responds with playing that has grace as its foundation but which also combines vitality, thoughtful concentration

and an attractive upbeat spirit. Beissel comments on the chamber-music nature of K414, a factor highlighted by the intimacy of this performance. In K271 Beissel's polished phrasing harbours enlivening detail without sounding pernickety, and Litvintseva gives the pleasing impression of being able to combine technical and stylistic control with a sense of spontaneous invention. **Geoffrey Norris**

Mozart

Serenade No 5, K204/213a.
Divertimento No 10, K247

Zurich Chamber Orchestra / Roger Norrington
Sony Classical ® 88883 79391-2 (72' • DDD)



Recordings of Mozart's orchestral serenades are still relatively uncommon,

so this disc of two is welcome. Mozart composed them during his years in Salzburg, where, performed outdoors, they added lustre to such pleasantly happy city occasions as the end of a university term (K204) or the nameday of a local nobleperson (K247).

K204 is one of several that combine a complete set of 'symphonic' movements with violin concerto movements, a convenient way of making a 40-minute piece, not least because it could later be filleted to make a perfectly serviceable four-movement symphony, as indeed Mozart did with this very piece. Conducting the modern instruments of the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Roger Norrington is typically attentive to the music's gestural language and takes the opportunity to show his usual sense of fun in the switching metres of the finale. Leader Willi Zimmermann is an efficient soloist in the demanding concerto movements. Somehow, though, the feeling is of the piece being a bit too controlled, the notes over-clipped, the whole lacking the dash and sheer joy in orchestral sound that can make the music of this period in Mozart's life so bracing.

K247 is more successful, set in motion by an energetic *Allegro* and continuing on its way with grace and good humour. Norrington finds a better balance between individual events and the music's overall momentum (for instance in the first of the two Minuet movements and again in the romping finale), but although a greater warmth in the string-playing brings us closer to the genial summer-night glow that ought by rights to characterise this kind of music, it is often compromised by

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intonation smudges and a coarseness in high-lying violin passages (of which there are quite a few). A less chilly acoustic might have helped too. Lindsay Kemp

Nielsen

Symphonies - No 1, Op 7; No 3, 'Sinfonia espansiva', Op 27 Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra / Sakari Oramo



Bracing and genial by turns, I guess you might characterise these symphonies as

Nielsen's most companionable. The first and second subjects of the First's opening movement typify those personality traits, an assertive resilience offset by an embraceable melody that could only have come from this composer's pen. Sakari Oramo has his Royal Stockholm Philharmonic wind players relax into its almost Baroque-like ornateness, and when the tune 'turns' in the violins, it does so with effortless charm.

But it's the evolution of those tunes, the gamesmanship of Nielsen's composition, the delicious melodic transformations and tonal shifts, the Beethovenian rigour, that keep the intrigue on high alert – and Oramo so clearly delights in each unexpected revelation, breathing with and through the music with self-evident appreciation of its infectious ebullience. The rolling *Andante* of the First has such generosity of spirit, the *scherzo* a rustic gaucheness, and with the finale's striding open-air quality we seem to be leaving off where the opening movement of the Third will take off.

The revving-up of its energy source at the start portends one hell of a ride and when the the main theme becomes a waltz, and not just any waltz but a whirling carousel of a waltz, the euphoric recapitulation with its descanting horns feels so deliciously inevitable. Oramo's release of energy at this point gives Leonard Bernstein's slightly rough and ready but wildly spontaneous recording (with the Royal Danish Orchestra) a run for its money. The 'Espansiva' heart of the piece is the second movement Andante pastorale with its lontano vocalise (Anu Komsi and Karl-Magnus Fredriksson), and is a departure in every sense - it's a rarefied air that Oramo breathes.

With the big Brahmsian tune of the finale, the work and the performance take on a wholehearted inclusiveness, though a

general reservation I have about the extremely lively sound of the Stockholm Concert Hall, as captured by the BIS engineers, is amplified in the coda, where the syncopation of the cross-cutting trombones is somewhat indistinct and not nearly as exciting as it might be in the dense and noisy final *tutti*. **Edward Seckerson** *Sym No 3 – selected comparison*:

Royal Danish Orch, Bernstein (1/91^R) (SONY) SB3K89974

Schumann

Violin Concerto, WoO23^a.
Piano Trio No 3, Op 110^b
Isabelle Faust VID ^bJean-Guihen Queyras VC

^bAlexander Melnikov pf ^aFreiburg Baroque
Orchestra / Pablo Heras Casado
Harmonia Mundi (F) HMC90 2196 (62' • DDD)



Isabelle Faust brings her flawless technique and peerless intelligent musicianship to two

works from a period during which Schumann's sanity was said to be starting to decline. Clara Schumann suppressed the Violin Concerto, deeming it symptomatic of her husband's compromised mental state, but Menuhin considered it to be the 'missing link' between the concertos of Beethoven and Brahms. It is, perhaps, a troublesome work: compared with those more popular concertos, the violin's ability to soar and sing is exploited less, while making sense of the lolloping polonaise finale is no mean feat. Faust's focused tone, stripped of vibrato, combines with the richness of the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra to demonstrate that this work is no strained product of a frail mind but rather a characteristic experiment by this everquesting composer to combine symphonic concerto form with the fantasie style explored in his concertante piano works. Tetzlaff and Marwood bring out more of the work's lyricism, while Baiba Skride takes a similar approach to Faust. All these are on modern instruments (and all are past Gramophone Editor's Choices), whereas the new disc uses gut strings and period woodwind and brass. This posits an interesting aesthetic question: if an 'authentic' reading is supposed to be an attempt to recreate the sounds of the work's first performance, what of a work composed in 1853 but not premiered until 1937?

The unique coupling is the Third Piano Trio. This has been recorded on period instruments before, by the Benvenue Trio, but Faust, Queyras and Melnikov offer a technically sharper, more imaginatively phrased reading. Andsnes and the Tetzlaffs, in their standard-setting moderninstrument recording, emphasise the phantasmagorical in the opening movement's ghostly arabesques and highlight that odd moment in the development - at around 6'20" - when it sounds as if a temporally displaced jazz trio has wandered in; they make it more of an event, an interruption. Faust & Co play the slow movement's central convulsion for all its worth, however, but their calmer, more consistent conception of the work means that the arrival at the finale's G major is less of a release than with Andsnes/ Tetzlaffs, who graphically chart the progression from the first movement's unease, through the oblique central movements, to a truly cathartic close.

David Threasher

Vn Conc - selected comparisons:

Tetzlaff, Frankfurt RSO, P Järvi
(2/12) (ONDI) ODE1195-2
Marwood, BBC Scottish SO, Boyd
(11/12) (HYPE) CDA67847
Skride, Danish Nat SO, Storgårds
(10/13) (ORFE) C854 131A
Pf Trio No 3 – selected comparisons:
Benvenue Pf Trio (2/11) (AVIE) AV2210
Andsnes, C & T Tetzlaff (7/11) (EMI) 094180-2

Shostakovich · Stravinsky

Shostakovich Symphony No 8, Op 65 Stravinsky Concerto for Piano and Winds^a Olli Mustonen *of*

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Paavo Berglund Testament (© (2) SBT2 1500 (85' • ADD) Recorded live at the Philharmonie, Berlin, May 18, 2001



Writing for the Warner Icon box of Berglund's EMI recordings, David

Nice remembers the 'awful numbness' of the Eighth Symphony's Passacaglia that was his own first encounter with the Finnish conductor in concert, with the Scottish National Orchestra, whose audience apparently left in droves. There's thankfully no sign of such a reaction from the patrons at the Berlin Philharmonie, whose respectful applause is retained after a performance on the same expansively implacable lines as Berglund's Pentatone recording with the Russian National Orchestra, albeit shaped more flexibly (with some surprising, faltering slips) and with more pathos in that Passacaglia. The two scherzos are still comparably dour, even sullen, by the side of locally accented accounts by the likes of Kondrashin or

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Rozhdestvensky: like Haitink, Berglund sees the war machine, never the circus, in the composer's bipolar symphonic world.

If Stravinsky's concerto is similarly twofaced, Berglund and Mustonen see its serious side, whereas the pianist's studio recording at least smiles in the finale. The contemporary assessment of the Berlin reviewer who heard Mustonen's 'robotlike' performance - 'every accent an attack, every syncopation a hit' - does not seem wide of the mark.

Should the orchestra's relationship with Testament yield further issues of Berglund's scant five appearances at their head, there are greater riches in store from the broadcasts I've heard: accompanying Pletnev at his most quixotic in Rachmaninov's First Concerto in 1990, and a Beethoven First of perfectly balanced weight on his first appearance with them in 1988, when the strings glowed with the Karajan sheen but the players seemed more than open to a touch of neo-classical rigour. Peter Quantrill

Shostakovich - selected comparisons:

Russian Nat Orch, Berglund (A/06) (PENT) PTC5186 084

Stravinsky - selected comparisons:

Mustonen, Deutsches SO Berlin, Ashkenazy (DECC) → 440 2292DH

Shostakovich

Symphony No 14, Op 135

Gal James sop Thomas Oliemans bass Netherlands Chamber Orchestra / Gordan Nikolitch

Challenge Classics (F) . CC72654 (55' • DDD/DSD)



With its twin themes of death and resistance, Shostakovich's symphony of sorrowful

songs is as potent and pithy and defiant and beautiful as anything in his catalogue. 'When I combine music with words,' he wrote, 'it is more difficult to misunderstand my intentions.' And when the instrumental palette comprises a mere handful of strings and some judiciously particular percussion, the sounds are intensified in ways that totally transcend the letter of the printed page. Sonically, this piece is as unique as it is mysterious. Only Shostakovich's kindred spirit Britten tapped into music of the night with such concision and economy. I'm thinking, of course, of his Nocturne.

Gordan Nikolitch's Netherlands Chamber Orchestra furtively cross the threshold of the opening 'De profundis', the sighs of string basses barely etched on our consciousness. But the first thing one notices is the baritonal colour of the male soloist Thomas Oliemans - and these words belong to and sink to the unfathomable depths of a true basso profundo. The bottom notes are a stretch too far for Oliemans; and although we can already hear his keen and impassioned response to words and the benevolence of the later poem 'O Delvig, Delvig!' seems already to beckon, this music has the distinctive timbre of the Russian bass written into every inflection. An auditory adjustment is necessary. Then again, the incisiveness of the leaner voice truly lays bare the suppurating imagery of Apollinaire's 'The Zaporozhian Cossacks' Answer to the Sultan of Constantinople', and his intelligence and insight trump authenticity in most instances.

So, too, the Israeli soprano Gal James, who is by no stretch of the imagination a dramatic soprano in the Galina Vishnevskaya mould but who has the vibrancy and reach of a Mimì or a Rusalka and the temperament to ignite the 'Malagueña' or 'Loreley'. The latter has the most astonishing sonic and emotional range, and then there is 'The Suicide', to

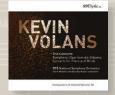
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RTÉ lyric CD145

Recently appointed music professor at Princeton University, Donnacha Dennehy's music has been described as "magnificently energetic" (New York Times), and "a wonder to hear" (Paul Griffiths).



KEVIN VOLANS: TRIO CONCERTO / SYMPHONY: DAAR KOM DIE ALIBAMA / CONCERTO FOR PIANO AND WINDS

RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra/ Storioni Trio/ Isabelle O'Connell (piano)

Born in South Africa, Kevin Volans became an Irish citizen in 1994. Essentially a modernist, his current work explores various aspects of anticonceptual, non-formal composition in a range of different styles.



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which James's beautifully nuanced singing brings a hypnotic limpidity.

But it is the piece itself that unfailingly makes the most indelible impression and Gordan Nikolitch leads from the front, maintaining the organic tension of the performance across and beyond the suspenseful transitions which link the poems. What could be creepier or more unsettling than the hollow time-marking interlude 'At the Santé Prison' or more affecting than Floris Mijnders's cello solos, which seem specifically to underscore the many lines of protest while nodding acknowledgement to Shostakovich's great champion Mstislav Rostropovich?

Edward Seckerson

Sibelius



Disappointing. Part of the problem here is the chilly ambience of BBC Hoddinott Hall

in Cardiff and the fact that the sound engineers have taken a step back to offer a more recessed image than, to my ears, is ideal. There is distance between us and even the front-desk strings; and, quite apart from the excitement that comes from a degree of immediacy in that regard, the whole image is wanting in a clear delineation of the score's inner workings.

Nor does Thomas Søndergård quicken the senses in either piece. We have to keep reminding ourselves of the startling originality of the first movement of the Second Symphony - not least its sleight of hand in the matter of sonata form - but part of that newness comes, too, from the clear-air clarity of the three principal groups of the orchestra, and here they kind of meld into one. The first movement should feel more of an up-beat to the second, and though Søndergård's pacing is sound enough and the acoustic works with the starkness and bleakness of the pizzicato opening, I want more fire and ice from the increasingly protracted upheavals later in the movement.

Tension and release are somewhat at a premium throughout the performance. And, perhaps because of that, even the long-awaited arrival of the finale's aspirational theme has less uplift than it can and should have, with the trumpet and horn fanfares and timpani tattoo (muddy) failing to lend the requisite injection of impulse. There is

one conspicuously gripping moment – and that's the eye-of-the-storm *pianissimo* just prior to the coda. But then again, I always wait for the moment in that blazing peroration where the violins' *tremolando* shifts up to the submediant of D major (B natural) and the roof all but starts to lift off. It goes for absolutely nothing here.

The mysterious, elusive Seventh is unremarkable, too, unfolding with sureness but not that sense of organic inevitability where the inner tensions are as the movement of tectonic plates and the climaxes (led by somewhat unfocused trombones) don't feel like they are coming up through the bass-lines. Timpani are again woolly and horns only just make it through the murk.

Competition is fierce in these symphonies; I'm afraid these performances are very much also-rans. **Edward Seckerson**

Solberg

'Orchestral, Choral and Organ Music' Fantasy and Fugue on the Folk Tune 'Se solens skjønne lys og prakt'^a. Good Friday Meditation^b. Norse March^c. Pastorale^c. Ver Sacrum^c. Symphony^c

^bAnna Sundström Otervik *mez* ^bMagnus Ingemund Kjelstad *bar* ^aTim Collins *org* ^bSolberg Centenary Singers / Marit Tøndel Bodsberg; ^cLiepāja Symphony Orchestra / Paul Mann Toccata Classics © TOCC0260 (82' • DDD • T/t)



Norwegian composer, conductor and organist Leif Solberg celebrated his 100th

birthday on November 18 last year and this CD, recorded in May and August 2014, was launched in Lillehammer to mark the event. A smattering of Solberg's works have appeared on disc over the past 20 years (Hemera, 2L, Simax) but even in his own country he remains an overlooked figure.

His modest output (32 works are listed on the website of the Norwegian National Library, www.nb.no, though Grove lists twice as many) is evenly split between his own instrument - the organ - and chorus, much of it written for the Lillehammer choir he directed for over 40 years. Of the handful of other works, four are orchestral and are collected here in conductor Paul Mann's performing editions. The disc's highlight is the marvellous Symphony (1950-51). Its three movements have a classical poise reminiscent of Haydn, yet Solberg clearly learned much from Nielsen. It was premiered professionally only in 1998, a few amateur performances and run-throughs having occurred

previously. It is a masterpiece of expressivity and poise, and under Mann's insightful direction the Latvian orchestra produce a fizzing account.

The technical mastery is exhibited in the couplings. The stirring *Norse March* and the *Pastorale* (a mid-1950s orchestration of a 1930 organ piece, written at the age of 16) are minor works but appealing music. Of more weight are *Ver Sacrum* (1947, orch 2003), the choral cycle *Good Friday Meditation* (1948) – a masterpiece of restrained joy – and *Fantasy and Fugue on the Folk Tune* 'Se solens skjønne lys og prakt', splendidly played by Tim Collins. The performances all round are sensitive and sympathetic, caught in very good sound to a total of 82 fascinating minutes. Warmly recommended. **Guy Rickards**

R Strauss





Also sprach Zarathustra, Op 30°. Macbeth, Op 23°. Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, Op 28°

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra / Andris Nelsons *Video directors* ^a Joost Honselaar,

bFerenc Soeteman

C Major Entertainment (®) 222 718908; (®) ≤2 719004 (80' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.0 & PCM stereo • 0) Recorded live, aDecember 25, 2013; bMay 7-10, 2014



Less than a year since the release of Andris Nelsons's CBSO recording of *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Orfeo, 7/14;

Philip Clark's top choice for his recent *Gramophone* Collection piece on the work, A/14), we have a new version from the Latvian maestro with the Concertgebouw Orchestra – one that allows us to see him in action as well as hear him. C Major's DVD/Blu-ray also includes *Till Eulenspiegel*, one of the same couplings as the Orfeo disc, but is especially welcome for featuring the oft-overlooked *Macbeth*.

That work receives a fine, predictably classy performance from the Dutch orchestra, with Nelsons underlining the granitic power of its narrative effectively and bringing especial allure to the characterisation of Lady Macbeth. Despite this, however, it remains a piece that's difficult to love: compared with the other tone-poems, the motivic working feels a little obvious, the score as a whole too prosaically rooted in a narrative rather than ideas.

Strauss's great tone-poem 'after Nietzsche' is, of course, all about ideas. Nelsons's interpretation here is in many

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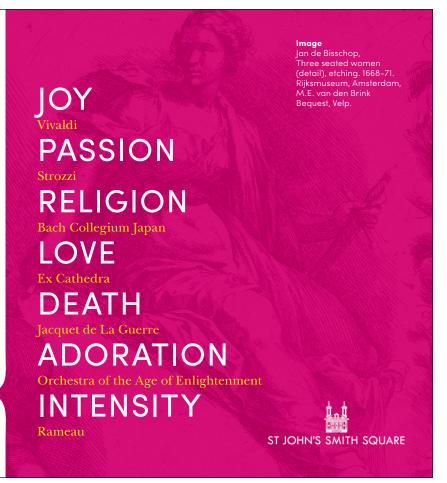
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respects close to his Birmingham account (set down nearly two years before the Amsterdam performance captured here). There's definitely the same welcome flexibility and lack of grandstanding. His way with the opening is a little more conventional (we don't have the slide-rule attention to dynamics of the CBSO 'Sunrise' or the extraordinary extended rumble that concludes it), and there are other small variations here and there – his 'Tanzlied' on this release is a touch more relaxed, for example.

The playing of the Dutch orchestra is, if anything, a whisker more refined but it is also a little less wild in its abandon or impetuous in its yearning. There's undeniable added excitement in watching the performance, too. Nelsons's podium manner is relaxed and warm, characteristics that seep through into the playing, while the camera direction is excellent and cannily in tune with the musical rhythms.

Till Eulenspiegel gains perhaps even more from being watched, and the performance here is a delight – mischievous, light on its feet and played with impeccable virtuosity. With excellent sound and picture quality, this disc is highly recommended.

Hugo Shirley

AR Thomas

'Music for Strings, Featuring Young Musicians' Incantation^a. Passion Prayers^b. Violin Concerto No 1, 'Spirit Musings'^c. Jubilee^d. Cantos for Slava^e. Rumi Settings^f. Dancing Galaxy^g

af Stefan Hersh, ^cMarc Rovetti vns ^eLeah Gastler va f Julian Hersh, ^bScott Kluksdahl vc ^eJanwong McKiggan pf ^dThe Juilliard School Student Orchestra / Xian Zhang; ^bNetwork for New Music / Jan Krzywicki; ^eSouthern Methodist University Student Wind Ensemble / Jack Delaney; ^cStudent Fellows of the Tanglewood Music Centre / Laura Jackson

Nimbus Alliance (F) NI6263 (80' • DDD)



The association between Augusta Read Thomas and Nimbus reaches a fourth

volume devoted largely to her music for strings. The media covered is accordingly wide – ranging from the expressive raptness drawn from solo violin in *Incantation* (1995), via the impulsive flights of fancy in *Passion Prayers* (1999) for cello and notably Schoenbergian sextet, to the cumulative intensity of *Spirit Musings* (1997), whose three movements lock violin and chamber ensemble together in a timbral and textural unity as makes it the more surprising that this piece was initially written for flute.

From the two sets of duos, *Cantos for Slava* (2007) idiomatically substitutes cello for viola over three highly contrasted pieces marking the 80th birthday of Rostropovich, while *Rumi Settings* (2001) are not 'songs without words' but rather instrumental paraphrases whose ruminative eloquence amply evokes and transforms the essence of the original poems.

The remaining two works depart from the stated concept; but this is no hardship when Jubilee (2010) is a 'concerto for orchestra' of no mean resource - its four movements focusing on brass, woodwind, strings and percussion respectively, while Dancing Galaxy (2004) is a tensile study for wind ensemble whose incisive interplay is more notable given the sombre stasis from which it emerges and to which it returns. Performances underline the virtuosity and skill with which Thomas writes for musicians - not least Spirit Musings and *Jubilee*, heard here in 'unedited live concert performances' of startling assurance - with the sound and annotations fully comparable to previous discs in this valuable series. Richard Whitehouse

Vieuxtemps · Ysaÿe

'The Romantic Cello Concerto, Vol 6'

Vieuxtemps Cello Concertos - No 1, Op 46; No 2,
Op 50 Ysaÿe Méditation, Op 16. Sérénade, Op 22

Alban Gerhardt vc Royal Flemish Philharmonic

Orchestra / Josep Caballé-Domenech

Hyperion (F) CDA67790 (65' • DDD)



The sixth volume of Hyperion's 'Romantic Cello Concerto' series lights upon two works

by the celebrated 19th-century Belgian violinist Henri Vieuxtemps. Championed here by Alban Gerhardt, the music shows that Vieuxtemps, perhaps more familiar through his seven violin concertos, possessed also a sensibility for the sonority, technical scope and colour spectrum of the cello. If the First Concerto of 1876 was apparently composed without any particular cellist in mind, the Second of a couple of years later was conceived for Joseph Servais (1850-85), whose father François (1807-66) was responsible for putting the Belgian cello school on the map much as Vieuxtemps did for the violin. If the two cello concertos are not perhaps as exploratory in terms of technique and structure as some of Vieuxtemps's violin concertos, they certainly know their way round the cello and are characterised by strength of ideas, a supple expressiveness and a sure dramatic instinct. So much so that it is hard to see why they have not entered the mainstream repertoire in the same way as, say, the Saint-Saëns concertos have.

Heinrich Schiff made the first recording of the Vieuxtemps concertos back in the 1980s, since when nobody else seems to have risen to the challenge until now; but these performances by Gerhardt with the Royal Flemish Philharmonic under Josep Caballé-Domenech never fail to hold one's attention. The fill-ups are by the Vieuxtemps pupil Eugène Ysaÿe – more cello music by a violinist but in the *Méditation* and *Sérénade* revealing a confident, alluring touch. **Geoffrey Norris**

Walton

Symphony No 2. Viola Concerto^a. Spitfire Prelude and Fugue. Crown Imperial ^aRoberto Díaz *va* New Haven Symphony Orchestra / William Boughton
Nimbus Alliance (© NI6290 (73' • DDD)
Recorded live at Woolsey Hall, New Haven, CT, February & November 2013



This latest Nimbus disc of Walton is a companion for the outstanding earlier

issue of the First Symphony and Violin Concerto from the same forces (10/10). It came as rather a surprise to me in that earlier disc that an orchestra I had hardly heard of should play Walton's difficult scores with such finesse and warmth, a lesson for some of our British orchestras and a fine tribute to American standards.

The Second Symphony is a wonderfully crafted work in which Waltonian electricity is not of such a high voltage as in the First. Nonetheless, William Boughton draws from the New Haven orchestra a comparably magnetic performance. The jazzy syncopations so typical of Walton need to have a degree of freedom, which is just what an English conductor and an American orchestra achieve. The first movement is the strongest and sets the pattern for the whole performance, with its elaborate instrumentation including a piano as well as extra percussion. The second movement comes as a slight disappointment when its themes are not as striking as so many of Walton's are. Boughton then has great success in the finale, where he brings out the tongue-incheek element in the composers's use of a 12-note theme for the variations, a joyous conclusion to the work.

When it comes to the Viola Concerto, we have a triumphant performance, thanks

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to the stunning playing of the soloist, Roberto Díaz, Principal Viola of the Philadelphia Orchestra until 2006, when he became Principal of the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. It is striking that though Díaz gives a virtuoso performance, it is not one that calls attention to itself but always works with the orchestra. From first to last this is a haunting performance.

The two supplementary items have the same understanding qualities as the two main works. The *Spitfire Prelude and Fugue*, drawn from the music Walton wrote for the film *The First of the Few*, makes a most satisfying item on its own terms, while *Crown Imperial*, written for the coronation of King George VI in 1937, with its fanfare opening theme and glorious central melody, matches any of Elgar's marches in fervour. Beautifully recorded in live performances in Woolsey Hall, New Haven, this is another winner among Walton discs. **Edward Greenfield**

'Concerto'

R Edwards Arafura Dances^a S Goss Guitar Concerto^b Salinas Danzas peregrinas^c John Williams gtr ^cHoracio Durán charango ^cRichard Harvey cl/kena/sicus/mand/rec ^{ac}English Chamber Orchestra; ^bRoyal Philharmonic Orchestra / Paul Daniel JCW Recordings (F) JCW3 (62' • DDD)



Those of us who remember John Williams's frequent collaborations with the

Chilean group Inti-Illimani will recall the energy and obvious affection the musicians exhibited onstage. In Danzas peregrinas, the group's original music director and main composer Horacio Salinas has taken some of Inti-Illimani's best-loved dances and formed an equally amiable suite, somewhat reminiscent of Rodrigo's Fantasia for a Gentleman, for three soloists and orchestra. By contrast, the Australian composer Ross Edwards's Arafura Dances for guitar and string orchestra bookends an exquisite 'Arafura Arioso' with two of his maninya dances, the whole redolent of the vibrant flora and fauna of Australia's coastal Top End. Guitarist and composer Stephen Goss's Guitar Concerto is different again, its three movements respectively inspired by the music of North America, England and Latin America.

Featuring Williams, Horacio Durán on *charango* (an Andean ukulele-like instrument) and Richard Harvey on various wind instruments including the Andean

kena and sicus, Danzas peregrinas is a riot of movement and colour leavened by lyrical episodes such as the gentle 'Preludio' for guitar and cello alone, and the lyrical 'Palimpsesto', primarily for solo clarinet with guitar accompaniment. And if the warmth and melancholy of Edwards's often spare, angular writing proves an economical evocation of greens, ochres and turquoises, Goss's expertly orchestrated gear-changes from bustling, jazz-fuelled energy to Elgarian nostalgia to vigorous Latin rhythms is a veritable roller-coaster ride. Performances are impeccable throughout, with Williams, ably supported by the ECO and RPO under Daniel, as technically and musically provocative as ever. William Yeoman

'Graffiti'

Chin Graffiti^a Neuwirth Maramondo Multiplo^b
Sun Ra Outer Nothingness^c. Pleiades^c

^bMarco Blaauw tpt ^cFrank Gratkowski sax
Ensemble Musikfabrik / ^aPeter Rundel,

^bChristian Eggen
Wergo (F) WER6861-2 (66' • DDD)



Wergo's series focusing on Ensemble Musikfabrik has now reached its eighth

and arguably most fascinating instalment, not least for two substantial pieces by composers of the middle generation. In Graffiti (2013), Unsuk Chin brings out the concept's subversiveness - tracing its presence in the constantly renewing texture of 'Palimpsest', then the ominous context of its occurrence in 'Notturno urbano', before 'Passacaglia' evinces an appropriately anarchic slant on its timehonoured form - capping off what is the composer's most combative work in recent years. Hardly less absorbing is Miramondo multiplo (2007), Olga Neuwirth's trumpet concerto whose five movements have both allegorical and evocative overtones. Thus 'Aria of the Angel' finds the soloist in direct confrontation with wind and percussion, tension gradually subsiding into the languorous 'Aria of Memory' (replete with allusions to 'cool jazz'), before the sardonic 'Aria of Cold Blood' with the soloist locked into a morass of orchestral ostinatos: 'Aria of Peace' then unfolds as a rapt monologue against hazy string harmonies, before 'Aria of Pleasure' has the soloist in a trio with orchestral trumpets before the brusque pay-off. Marco Blaauw is at his unflinching best in a reduction which loses nothing of the original's impact.

The remaining items are products of the unique worldview of Herman Blount (1914-93), aka Sun Ra, whose determinedly cosmic approach to free jazz is heard here in the largely improvised Outer Nothingness, with its explosive central outburst, then the intricately detailed Pleiades, which responds especially well to Frank Gratkowski's far-reaching (though hardly far-fetched!) arrangement. The latter contributes some scintillating saxophone, while Musikfabrik give their collective all throughout. Suitably vivid sound and lavish packaging are further enhancements of a release that has few equals among recent contemporary miscellanies.

Richard Whitehouse

'Through Time'

Elgar Romance, Op 62 Françaix Divertissement Mozart Bassoon Concerto, K191 Villa-Lobos Ciranda das sete notas Vivaldi Bassoon Concerto, RV472

English Chamber Orchestra / Rui Lopes bn Solo Musica (F) SM211 (57' • DDD)



This remarkable anthology comes from Rui Lopes, a highly musical and virtuoso

bassoonist whom the English Chamber Orchestra accompany most sensitively.

Villa-Lobos's *Ciranda das sete notas* is the most exotic piece here. It has Portuguese origins and was sung and danced in a circle: the seven notes of the title are heard at the start of the piece in an ascending scalic passage and the theme returns repeatedly as the rhythmic tension increases. The poignantly lyrical Brazilian 'Modinha' can be heard at the conclusion of what is altogether most entertaining music. Françaix's *Divertissement* is a fourmovement sonata, moving from rhythmic piquancy to a timid *Lento*, a nimble *scherzo* and an enticingly unpredictable finale.

Mozart wrote his Bassoon Concerto when he was 18. It shows the instrument's lyrical qualities in its tunefulness, has moments of humour as well as melancholy, and plenty of agility in the rondo-minuet finale with its variations. Vivaldi's Concerto is a work of *galant* rhythmic finesse, similarly richly melodic in its expressive slow movement, and mixes humour and melancholy in the finale.

The last of the works is a charming Romance by Elgar, simple in form, to which Rui Lopes and the orchestra both respond affectionately. Ivan March

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NEW MUSIC FROM IRELAND

Arnold Whittall listens to orchestral and operatic music by leading Irish composers recorded by state broadcaster RTÉ



Gerhard Markson conducts a tour de force performance of Gerald Barry's The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant

hese releases from the Dublinbased RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra have a strong international flavour. Though long resident in Ireland, Kevin Volans was born in South Africa, and, like Gerald Barry – both were born in 1949 – owes much to his years of study in Germany with Stockhausen and Kagel. Donnacha Dennehy (b1970) also studied abroad and is currently based at Princeton University in the USA. All three composers share a commitment to qualities rejecting the avant-garde or high modernist complexity that ruled the roost for a time during the mid-20th century; and all three make very clear that this stance need not lead to music that sounds bland and easy-going.

Using the time-honoured labels of symphony and concerto, Kevin Volans offers not so much a confrontation with tradition as an alternative to it. His Symphony from 2010 uses the title of an Afrikaans folksong, 'Daar kom di Alibama', which is not quoted literally, though its repetitive simplicity can be felt to determine the character of the music. As with the concertos, Volans walks a stylistic tightrope, the risk of stagnating into deadening uniformity acknowledged, only to be averted by animating processes that keep monotony at bay. With the Trio Concerto (2005) the considerable energy of the music doesn't entirely counter a certain anonymity in the actual material. The Piano Concerto No 1 (completed

in 1995, revised in 2012) is rather more characterful and impressively gripping in the way its formal constraints are turned to dramatic effect. Here, too, the emphasis on distinctly layered textures suggests that a residue from high-modernist techniques is constructively interacting with Volans's personal critique of those very same techniques. Intriguing confrontations result.

At one point in **Gerald Barry**'s opera *The* Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant the main character declares that 'people are hard and brutal', and the unrelenting assaults on ears and brain characteristic of Barry's music might confirm that hardness and brutality are what matter most to him. Whereas his most recent opera, The Importance of Being Earnest, brews up edgily manic comic effects from bruising encounters with Oscar Wilde's famous play, this setting of a film script by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, premiered in 2005, is much less stylised and rather more extreme in the way it forces the words to fit the brittle contours of Barry's hyperactive music. In a note Barry describes Fassbinder's work as 'a love story; ecstatic, moving, gripping, obsessive, funny, heartbreaking, filled with tenderness, hatred, jealousy, compassion'. However, in Barry's setting the obsessive dominates to the virtual exclusion of all else. This concert recording taken from premiere performances in Dublin is a tour de force for the dedicated singers and players but something of a trial for the audience; while

Fassbinder's cautionary tale of a celebrated fashion designer whose childish instincts seem to bring out comparable behaviour in all around her is redeemed by a degree of psychological depth and considerable verbal panache, Barry's bludgeoning music breathlessly skims the surface with scarcely a hint of 'tenderness' or 'compassion' from beginning to end.

As the representative of a younger generation of Irish-born composers, Donnacha Dennehy has made a point of showing how, in a relatively early piece like The Vandal (2000), he could create positive effects by launching into bargainbasement minimalism, then countering it with something more diverse and distinctive. With O from the following year, Dennehy faced the challenge of writing an in memoriam for the Irish composer and teacher Brian Boydell without abandoning his already habitual jauntiness in favour of wholeheartedly melancholic modernism. There are interesting tensions in the result, though in the end relentlessly chugging rhythms take the music too far from the more conventional kinds of postmodern pathos - to be heard, for example, in certain works by John Adams - that might otherwise have been appropriate.

Relentlessness is more positively deployed in Hive for chorus and orchestra (2005), which also has a distinctive angle on a kind of 'spectral' harmonic construction that had led Dennehy to the prospect – not to be realised – of study with Gérard Grisey. Concerned as it is with different ways of characterising the teeming and often apparently aimless life forces at work in large cities, Hive could surely have accommodated more varied inflections of its basic elements than come across in this performance. So it is left to Crane (2008-09), another of Dennehy's responses to urban development, to show the best balance of diversity and similarity, action and reflection, in the works on offer here. @

THE RECORDINGS



Volans Orch Wks **RTÉ Nat SO / Maloney, Buribayev** RTÉ Lyric FM **(E)** CD147



Barry Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant Sols; RTÉ Nat SO / Markson RTÉ Lyric FM ® ② CD261



Dennehy Orch Wks **RTÉ Nat SO / Maloney** RTÉ Lyric FM (F) CD145

Sibelius's Symphony No 7

Thomas Søndergård talks to Rebecca Schmid about Sibelius's final symphony

Sibelius's Seventh Symphony emerged during a creatively fertile period that included the Sixth Symphony, the tone-poem *Tapiola* and incidental music to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Presented as the *Fantasia sinfonica* No 1 upon its 1924 premiere, the symphony which the composer had worked on for at least six years and subsequently renamed No 7 'in einem Satze' ('in one movement') would be his last. Although Sibelius lived to be over 90, he destroyed material for an Eighth Symphony in the firewood stove of his home, Ainola, in the Finnish countryside and produced only two small works after 1931. The Seventh Symphony, however, embodies a culmination of the formal and motivic innovations which he had only begun in earlier symphonies, transcending sonata form while metamorphosing its basic elements into an intricate, whirlwind journey.

For Thomas Søndergård, who first came across the symphony aged 11 at a library in his native Denmark, the approximately 20-minute work possesses a kind of primal power. He cites Bruckner's Ninth (and last) Symphony as a kind of antipode to its free structure. 'It's so interesting to see what the composers arrive at as statements of something that meant the world to them: the paper and the pen and the music in their minds,' he says in his hotel suite overlooking the skyline of Berlin's Mitte district. 'Sibelius's feet are more planted in a folk tradition - where music comes from, what we sing and dance to.' The conductor uses the German word Schwung ('momentum' or 'buoyancy') to describe this energy, recalling the sight of his six-month-old niece when she first moved to music. 'It's probably easier for us to understand when we hear music for the first time. But we cannot resist composers who maintain this feeling.'

Søndergård believes that if Nielsen is the 'Scandinavian Shostakovich', Sibelius may be a 'Scandinavian Tchaikovsky', all the while integrating the humour of Britten and the bravery of Mahler. 'He also conveys these sudden changes of emotion,' he says, citing Sibelius's use of simple folk gestures such as thirds, while also warning that this simplicity can be deceptive. 'If you don't approach it as a joy – something which is not less of a jewel just because it's a little light-footed – then it can easily fall flat.' He leafs through his score, a Wilhelm Hansen Edition revised in 1980 which is held as the authoritative source. I have downloaded the same edition (with less detail about its origins) onto my iPad. 'We can



Thomas Søndergård holds positions with the BBC NOW and the RSNO

always hear whether the music is major or minor,' says Søndergård with childlike fascination. 'But Sibelius uses this awareness to delay resolution. He spreads out harmonic gestures so that we never know where it's going to land.'

He points to the whole-tone scale that opens the symphony, beginning on a G in the timpani and resolving unexpectedly on an A minor chord, as an example. 'I don't know anyone who can write such a suspension.' He then jumps to what he describes as a chorale of bare strings in which the viola must play in an uncharacteristically high range. 'We rehearsed quite a lot to get the long phrases,' he notes. 'And also some of the harmonic suspensions. When the basses and violins enter, you have this whole section playing this lovely tune of compassion.'

Only two pages later begins the melting build into the first entrance of a solo trombone, which in his manuscripts Sibelius indicated with his wife's name, Aino. Despite a dramatic resolution on C major, there is a suspension in the second



The historical view

Jean Sibelius In conversation with Santeri Levas (from Jean Sibelius: A Personal Portrait)

'It is often thought that the essence of symphony lies in the form, but this is certainly not the case. The content is always the primary factor, while form is secondary, the music itself determining its outer form.'

Olin Downes The New York Times, 1926

'Here a form was attained through which the flow of the composer's ideas were set free rather than confined. There are no words to describe this freedom, this powerful unity, this absolute consistency, this irresistible mastery.'

Sir Colin Davis In conversation with Daniel M Grimley (The Cambridge Companion to Sibelius)

The end of the Seventh Symphony is a very bleak affair. After the hurricane, the wind screeching through the music, Sibelius finally begins to pray, but the undertakers are already there.'

flute, clarinet and violins which Søndergård sought to emphasise. 'There are moments where Sibelius allows the music to rest for a while, but he doesn't know when the shadows are going to arrive – how long they are going to spread over the joy.' It is often the inner voices that initiate these emotional shifts, explains Søndergård. 'They have the harmonic clashes that tell the ear where we move. So I took a lot of time to ask the second players to play louder than the principals.'

The following development section opens with a short restatement of the first theme, which Søndergård notes for the rhythmic displacement of its harmonies. The music flows organically between fragments of *cantabile*, stormy and dance-like material, with particularly inventive writing for the woodwinds – such as a dialogue between the bassoon and

'The woodwinds must scream through as they struggle to keep themselves on top of the waves' – Thomas Søndergård

clarinets which Søndergård says must be timed precisely with the timpani. In the symphony's *Scherzo*, which begins with the indication of *Vivacissimo*, the conductor has discovered that the undulating strings' mysterious introduction to the trombone's second entrance directly evokes music from *The Tempest*, which Sibelius wrote the following year. These dark undercurrents in the Seventh create the only moment in which balance is a challenge, says Søndergård: 'The woodwinds must scream through as they struggle to keep themselves on top of the waves – which actually fits the music's overall character.'

After the wave swells and crashes, the music morphs into a racing dance in which Søndergård detects a kind of 'Spanish flair', noting the arrival of the tango in early 20th-century Finland. 'It is tricky to get this all together because the woodwinds sit far apart, and the articulation must be very clear even though the music is calming down.' He compares the sweeping wind tune which opens the *Allegro molto moderato* to a kind of fanfare which then transforms into a Baroque, operatic gesture. This final stretch into the coda demands a conductor to be on his toes. As an example Søndergård cites the rapid transition from *Vivace* into *Presto*. 'You don't have much time to get the right tempo and bring out the melodies. Then just as you've gotten it right, you need to do the *rallentando* into the *Adagio*.'

The trombone makes its C major declamation above a climatic rising string motive until the music finally rests on a chorale-like melody which for Sondergaard has a nearly religious quality. 'You try and rip off everything you don't want life to consist of – the pain and the fear,' he offers as a poetic analysis. 'By the *Largamente*, you stand completely naked because you tried to get rid of the pain. And then you only have the high strings – which is the open sky.' But Søndergård believes that if the symphony is a kind of tone-poem, the story transcends physical images, comparing the final harmonic suspension into C major to 'the spirit which flies from the body and communicates with the maker.' Sibelius doesn't sail off without a wink, however, quoting his *Valse triste* for four measures. 'This is a smile to all of us,' says Søndergård. **6**

▶ To read Gramophone's review of Thomas Søndergård's recording turn to page 43

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DVD & BLU-RAY



NIOBE, REGINA DI TEBE STEFFANI

Royal Opera House

Steffani's musically rich and emotionally intense fifth opera *Niobe, regina di Tebe* was revived in 2008, and is heard here in The Royal Opera's acclaimed 2010 production. Véronique Gens, Jacek Laszczkowski and lestyn Davies star, conducted by Baroque specialist Thomas Hengelbrock.

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Chamber



Mike Ashman reviews the last volume in a Swedish quartet cycle:

'Stenhammar frequently shows how alive he is to the world of his time with sudden shifts in key' ► REVIEW ON PAGE 57



Jeremy Dibble listens to six rare British 'phantasy' quartets:

'Hurlstone was drawing not only on the organicism of Brahms but also on the irony of Mahler' > REVIEW ON PAGE 59

Antoine

Violin Sonata, Op 3. Piano Quartet, Op 6 Oxalys

Musique en Wallonie © MEW1473 (51' • DDD)



Known by Vincent d'Indy as 'the soldier musician' because so much of his music was

written during the First World War, the musical phrases of Georges Antoine look to wrangle themselves into threads of melancholy beauty but lack the intricacy – either in filigree form or the real skill of complex simplicity – that you feel he was seeking. It's hardly surprising – Antoine died just after the Armistice in 1918, aged 26, yet to crystallise any big musical ideas into his chamber music.

Thankfully any shortcomings in the music are plugged by Oxalys. Often when chamber groups form with determination at music college they can give the impression of long-term collaboration relatively quickly. But here there is no mistaking the sound of 20 years' musical fellowship in their easy rubato, tuning and ensemble. There is a strong element of unfulfilled potential to which they do the best justice possible, and which they also make an actively Romantic experience right up to the harmonically unsatisfactory ending to the Violin Sonata in A flat. There is a neat purpose to their playing that is particularly well pitched for this music: that Antoine could have been a great composer they clearly want to establish, but they do so without trying to play into the Quartet the kind of passion it is likely his later work would have displayed, especially if his return to civilian life had brought him into contact with the likes of Chausson and Ysaÿe, as it most certainly would. Caroline Gill

Berg · Mendelssohn

Berg Lyric Suite
Mendelssohn String Quartet No 2, Op 13
Tetzlaff Quartet
AVI-Music ® AVI8553266 (58' • DDD)



The Tetzlaff Quartet is unusual in consisting of four busy soloists who get

together only intermittently. The upside is that what they do has the tension and imagination of four big personalities, and that certainly pays off here.

Their combined sound is highly refined and honed, resulting in a tautness of approach that gives Mendelssohn's A minor Quartet real potency and drive. Even in the most driven passages, textures always have a sparkling clarity. Just dip into the first movement (beginning at 2'30"), where viola player Hanna Weinmeister takes over the melody with eloquence. The Elias are more refulgent in tone, generally more open-hearted in the touching Adagio non lento, but the Tetzlaff's greater austerity is also very moving. And their finale is particularly searing, bringing out the contrast between the melodramatic tremolos and the leader's impassioned recitatives, the light-as-air passages of the upper three players and the pungent pizzicatos of the cellist. The Elias are equally zesty but with a wilder edge here, as if chaos is a hair's breadth away. Both, in their different ways, are riveting.

The Berg makes a compelling if unusual coupling and the Tetzlaff reveal its extraordinary beauties. They are alive to every nuance, every emotional change of this highly charged music, yet never lose sight of the music's architecture. Just sample the way they move from an otherworldly quiet to the most impassioned playing (tr 6, from 2'37") with a sense of inevitability and they convey the mournful desperation of the finale more potently than the Cecilia Quartet. I'd rate this new reading of the Lyric Suite alongside that treasurable performance of the Tetzlaff/ Uchida/Boulez Chamber Concerto (Decca, 12/08). Harriet Smith

Mendelssohn – selected comparison: Elias Qt (5/07) (ASV) GLD4025 Berg – selected comparison:

Cecilia Qt (11/13 - American edition) (ANA) AN2 9984

Bloch · Korngold · Zemlinsky

Bloch Three Nocturnes Korngold Piano Trio, Op 1 Zemlinsky Piano Trio, Op 3 Pacific Trio

Capriccio (F) C5221 (73' • DDD)



Strange engineering dogs these performances. Flanking the piano

in the middle are the strings, each at an extreme end; and all instruments appear to be separately miked, offering little feel of a cohesive group in a single credible acoustic. Cello at right is backwardly balanced, its innate warmth curtailed. Violin at left has a squeezed sound bordering on harshness when strenuously bowed.

Thus you hear only partially an emotional compass the musicians are striving to convey. Zemlinsky's Trio was originally written for clarinet, with an alternative violin transposition included at the behest of the publisher Simrock. It 'reflects a spiritual and stylistic debt to Brahms' (Antony Beaumont) but has a rhetoric of its own which the Pacific Trio sense. Yet their understanding is compromised by the recording, less so though in the *Andante*, where their feeling for lyricism is better presented.

Not as tightly structured but of a harmonically amazing intrepidity for a 12-year-old is Korngold's Trio. This group's playing suggests discomfort with its discursive character, though granted that impression may be due to squashed dynamics and restricted sound. The Beaux Arts Trio are in finer control yet adroit in performance and the venue is more expansively captured; but their cellist is reticently placed too. Perhaps the best of the Pacific emerges in Bloch's *Nocturnes*, very evocatively played, and the acoustic here isn't as seriously obtrusive.

Nalen Anthoni

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Zemlinsky, Korngold - selected comparison: Beaux Arts Trio (6/94) (PHIL) → 434 072-2PH

Bonis · Fauré

Bonis Piano Quartet No 1, Op 69 Fauré Piano Ouartet No 1, Op 15 Giardini Quartet

Evidence (F) EVCDO04 (55' • DDD)



Here's an enterprising programme from Quatuor Giardini. The marketplace is

quite crowded where Fauré's First Piano Ouartet is concerned. While tempi are generally well chosen in this new version, others bring out the work's highly contrasting moods to better effect. In the first movement, Eric Le Sage et al are more confiding in its more inward passages, while Domus are notably quick on their feet, which goes for the Scherzo second movement too. The Beaux Arts prove that speed is not everything here, combining a tempo that allows detail to tell with a delightful sense of interaction.

But the real test in this work is the mournful slow movement. Eric Le Sage and his colleagues are masterly here, alongside which the Giardini sound somewhat pallid. The Beaux Arts, several degrees warmer, engage more, as does the Capuçon/Caussé/Dalberto recording, though that is compromised by a swimmy acoustic. In the finale, the fingeriness of Le Sage and Domus's Susan Tomes pays dividends, and both ensembles find more contrast with the martial elements than do the Giardini.

However, any group championing the music of Mel Bonis has to be applauded. She lived a long and colourful life, though constantly had to battle to be taken seriously as a composer. When Saint-Saëns heard her First Piano Quartet, he unwittingly summed up her situation: 'I would never have thought a woman was capable of writing that.' It's a substantial and hugely imaginative piece, full of adventurous harmonies. Unfortunately it doesn't get the best airing here – the string tuning isn't always spot-on and I felt the Giardini could have made more of the striking textures of the Intermezzo and the swirling climaxes of the Andante, which has some extraordinary touches of whole-tone exoticism towards its close. There's already a fine reading of this piece by the Mozart Piano Quartet but there's certainly room for more. Harriet Smith

Fauré - selected comparisons: Beaux Arts Trio, Kashkashian

(6/90) (PHIL) > 422 350-2DH R & G Capucon, Caussé, Dalberto, Angelich (12/11) (VIRG) 070875-2 Le Sage, Kashimoto, Berthaud, Salque (10/12) (ALPH) ALPHA601 Domus (HYPE) CDA66166

Bonis - selected comparison:

Mozart Pf Qt (6/08) (MDG) MDG643 1424-2

Brahms · Reinecke



Brahms Two Clarinet Sonatas, Op 120 Reinecke Undine, Op 167. Introduzione ed Allegro appassionato, Op 256 Michael Collins c/ Michael McHale pf Chandos (F) CHAN10844 (70' • DDD)



Brahms wrote his late clarinet music for Richard Mühlfield. as did Reinecke his

Introduction and Allegro appassionato, a sombre work that contrasts admirably with *Undine*, the composer's flirtatious portrait of the mythical water sprite, subtitled 'sonata for piano and clarinet'.

On paper the Introduction and Allegro looks conventional enough but it springs to life in this interpretation by Michael Collins and Michael McHale as they give full measure to the appassionato marking, moving the music onwards and upwards. In Undine they catch the sprite's capricious nature, revelling in her mischief in and out of the waves as she is propelled along by the piano's rippling accompaniment. The Intermezzo and *Andante*, each composed with alternate fast-slow-fast sections, are played in disarming fashion before the athletic finale, where the reprise of the più lento theme is touching.

Brahms called Mühlfeld 'a master of his beautiful instrument', an epithet that could be extended to Collins who, with McHale, offers joyous performances of these lyrical but unsurprisingly cogent works. Their tempi in all the movements of both sonatas are well chosen. Details to relish include the wind-down of the coda to the first movement of the First Sonata that is both sustained and expressive, as marked by Brahms, with feeling for the flow of the uninterrupted melody in the Andante and the lilt of the Ländler in the Allegretto. Their dynamic shaping of the phrases in the brilliant Vivace brings it to a thrilling conclusion. The Second Sonata's opening movement is truly *amabile*, the stormier paragraphs of the succeeding movements executed with aplomb. This is a most desirable issue, with a recording that balances the two instruments perfectly. Adrian Edwards

GRAMOPHONE Archive

Berg's Lyric Suite

Three recordings that came before the Tetzlaff Quartet's - and how Gramophone rated them



APRIL 1961

Berg Lyric Suite for String Quartet

Ramor Quartet



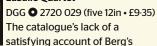
Vox mono O DL530 (12in • 30s) The music must be fiendishly difficult to play, and one is

reluctant to criticise the Ramor Quartet's very competent account of it - more particularly since it is the only one available. Yet the fact remains that it is not much more than competent. Few of the fast sections are up to tempo, and contrasts both of tempo and dynamics tend to be blurred. However they show a clear idea of the basic outlines, and with the warning that you must not expect the last degree of brilliance or refinement this disc can be warmly recommended. Jeremy Noble



Berg Lyric Suite for String Quartet

LaSalle Quartet



Lyric Suite (1926) hitherto is lamentable, and DGG should issue the LaSalle coupling of this and Op 3 separately, for they are at their finest in this composer. Consider the Allegro mysterioso, which here is like a hovering cloud of sparks, passionate yet insubstantial. Maybe the closing Largo desolato needs more deliberation, greater heaviness, but remarkable again is their handling of the last page, when, as if across an infinite distance, the music spins itself into silence. Max Harrison



GRAMOPHONE NOVEMBER 1974

Berg Lyric Suite for String Quartet Alban Berg Quartet

Telefunken SAT22549 (£2.55) The Alban Berg Quartet make the *Allegro mysterioso* far more

eerily mysterious than the Ramor, a real ghosts' dance, and are quite magical in the tenebroso sections of the Presto delirando. But so, of course, are the LaSalle, and choice between these two seems to me, for the moment at least, virtually impossible, especially as both are so well recorded, the highly detailed parts so clearly separated. One could point to a hundred places where these two ensembles place their emphases differently yet each presents a wholly valid interpretation. Both groups are subtle, poised, and convey the great sensuous warmth this music needs. I would be happy with either, or preferably both. Max Harrison

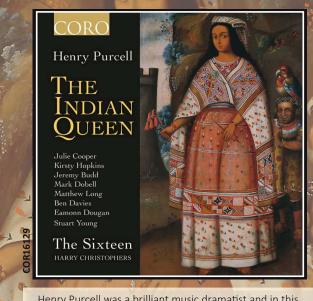
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Verso (F) VRS2155 (73' • DDD)



The generally vague booklet-notes accompanying this disc contain a revealing

quote. Erkoreka's teacher Michael Finnissy told his student that art has two essential ingredients, ambiguity and dirt. Perhaps that's the intention behind the opening selection Kaiolan's declamatory clusters, slow-drooling string portamentos and overall textural bleakness. Although Muraiki for solo bass flute can't completely avoid clichéd extended techniques and goes on too long for what the music has to say, I love the shakuhachi-like qualities of its simplest melodic material. Ertzak opens with a single note passed around between string trio, flute and clarinet, and soon morphs into mainly middle-register tremolos, followed by delicate lines in register extremes. After big rhythmic building-up at the halfway mark, the tremolos return, fragmented and shuffled with colourful sophistication.

Krater resembles Kaiolan but with more rhythmically engaging, virtuoso passagework. However, Rondó seems the clearest and most carefully crafted among the four works for larger ensemble, where Erkoreka's signature gestures (cluster chords, slides, quick asymmetrical phrases) unfold with more characterful contrasts and narrative flow. These qualities distinguish Saturno for clarinet and cello to even more imaginative effect, from its raucous opening flourishes and quiet lowpitched collisions to the lyrical clarinet lines supported by jagged cello pizzicatos and slow-motion tag-teaming above and beyond the staff. An arguably rambling solo piece for vibraphone, Pyrite, stands out for Erkoreka's skilful manipulation of the resonator pedal playing off percussive nonsustained note attacks. Say what you will about ambiguity and dirt but the musicians of Ensemble Recherche navigate Erkoreka's difficult scores with the utmost in clarity and cleanliness. Jed Distler

Gnattali

'Alma brasileira'

Sonatina No 2 for Guitar and Piano^a. Sonata for Cello and Guitar^b. Alma brasileira. Dança brasileira. Petite suite. Toccata em ritmo de samba - No 1; No 2. Saudade. Moto contínuo I. Negaceando. Canhoto. Vaidosa I. Capoeirando. Trapaceando. Manhosamente. Batuque. Toccata Franz Halász $gtr^{\rm b}$ Wen-Sinn Yang vc

aDébora Halász pf



The music of the hugely prolific Brazilian pianist, composer and arranger

Radamés Gnattali (1906-88) is so fluent and attractive that it's hard to believe that those very qualities worked against his being recognised as a serious artist in his lifetime and beyond. Not only that: Gnattali dared to make extensive use of Brazilian popular music and to write serious concert music for the guitar.

After exploring the piano and guitar music of composers such as Ginastera, Brouwer, Ponce, Castelnuovo-Tedesco and others, husband-and-wife duo Franz and Débora Halász have here chosen to place Gnattali's Sonatina No 2 for guitar and piano in the context of some of his solo works for both instruments; cellist Wen-Sinn Yang also joins Franz Halász for a gracefully piquant Sonata for cello and guitar.

Brazilian-born Débora Halász brings a potent expressivity and obvious authority to the piano music, which as guitarist Fabio Zanon points out in his booklet-note bears the influence of Chopin and Bartók though there are also echoes of Spanish masters such as Granados and Albéniz in Gnattali's effortless blending of popular dance forms and classical salon music. Franz Halász is, however, equally at home in the solo guitar music; and if he and his partner successfully bring out the rich lyrical strain and ear for colour in Gnattali's superb guitar-and-piano sonatina, his uncanny sensitivity to the simultaneous exigencies of both dance and song serve only to underscore the superior qualities of guitar pieces such as the titular Alma brasileira and Saudade. William Yeoman

Haydn · Hummel



Haydn Piano Trios - HobXV/1; HobXV/12; HobXV/27 Hummel Piano Trio No 2, Op 22 Trio Chausson

Mirare F MIR271 (63' • DDD)



Not always Haydn of good cheer. There was an arcane side; and, from his letters to

Marianne von Genzinger, a depressive one too. So no quick-stepping *Allegro* first

movement in No 27. The leaping piano clusters that spearhead the work don't suggest romping spirits. Instead Trio Chausson's interpretation, at a tempo about 10 points below the Beaux Arts, Florestan and András Schiff, abounds in harmonic pointing and expressive detail, the brighter lights of the exposition running into a sombre development with a dark-hued fugato. Pianist Boris de Larochelambert leads and supports, be it in the depths of the *Andante* or in steely resolve for the *Presto* finale.

Never trivial, de Larochelambert weights both individual notes and chords with care, his colleagues matching his rhythmic patterns in the *Allegro moderato* of No 12, easing and tightening tempo, accenting and shading phrases according to how they choose to characterise the music's shifting tonality. Yet harking back to the Baroque rectitude of No 1 poses no problems. These musicians offer their own dynamics and elucidation, smilingly recreating the second movement's Trio in the relative major.

Hummel, the pianist in Haydn's Trio No 14 for Salomon's concert at the Hanover Square Rooms in April 1792, is no mean composer of the genre either, giving the cello greater due, notably in the first variation of the *Andante con variazione*. Trio Chausson don't relax their probing vigilance; and Hummel benefits. An outstanding disc. Nalen Anthoni

Haydn Pf Trio No 27 – selected comparisons: Beaux Arts Trio (6/71^R, 11/73^R) (PHIL) 454 098-2PB9 Scbiff, Sbiokawa, Pergamenschikow

(1/96) (DECC) 444 862-2DH Florestan Trio (4/09) (HYPE) CDA67719 Haydn Pf Trio No 12 – selected comparison: Beaux Arts Trio (PENT) PTC5186 179 Hummel – selected comparison: Gould Pf Trio (NAXO) 8 573098

Henderickx

Disappearing in Light.
Raga III. The Four Elements
HERMESensemble

HERMESensemble © 8714 835 085669 (74' • DDD)



Breathy notes on shakuhachi answered by an eerily floating mezzo-soprano

vocalise, punctuated by splashes of sounds on temple gongs and followed by a bowed note or two on the kokyū. A scene from a Japanese puppet play, perhaps? Except the shakuhachi is in fact an alto flute, the kokyū a viola, and the music composed by Flemish-born Wim Henderickx.

For over 20 years, Henderickx (b1962) has been composing music which possesses more than a nod to the East and its many musical and spiritual traditions. There is nothing remotely exotic about Henderickx's east/west fusion, however. Sounding neither entirely European nor Eastern, Henderickx engages deeply with the question of 'integration' and has produced a distinctive style that is true both to itself and to the cultures and traditions upon which it draws.

In fact the first composition on this disc, Disappearing in Light (2008), takes its cue not from Japan but from India, forming part of the large-scale Tantric Cycle, which also includes a string (or saxophone) quartet, a song-cycle, an opera, a number of other ensemble pieces and the highly impressive Tejas for orchestra. Disappearing in Light does not possess the power and impact of Henderickx's percussion-heavy symphonic music but does draw very effectively on the composer's fondness for dramatic contrasts across its five-movement design. The ensemble evoke a vast array of colours and gestures in this performance, also heard in the more recent The Four Elements (2011), which rounds off the disc. Mezzo-soprano Mireille Capelle's vocalisations are especially characterful. The other work included here, Raga III (2010) for viola and electronics, is a reworking of Henderickx's earlier Raga III (1995) for viola and orchestra with the orchestral part stripped down to little more than an electronically generated drone, the solo part played here with plenty of warmth and expression by the excellent Marc Tooten. Pwyll ap Siôn

Hindemith

Violin Sonata^a. Cello Sonata^b. Trumpet Sonata^c. Trombone Sonata^d. Althorn Sonata^e

^aIsabelle Faust vn ^bAlexander Rudin vc ^cJeroen

Berwaerts tpt ^dGérard Costes tbn ^eTeunis van der

Zwart althorn Alexander Melnikov pf

Harmonia Mundi (Ē) HMC90 5271 (71' • DDD)



If there is a Cinderella among Hindemith's three dozen(ish) sonatas, it's not that

for double bass, tuba, or even the *Canonic Sonatina* for two flutes, but the Sonata for althorn (1943). A tenor instrument, known in the US as the alto horn, it is so rare that Hindemith accepted his sonata could be played on the horn or alto saxophone. It is a delightful work for a delightful instrument, beautifully rendered here.

Melnikov's role parallels that of Glenn Gould but his accounts are less wayward than the Canadian's, his soloists generally stronger. Indeed, in most of the sonatas, the primary competition comes from one-off recordings (now that Ensemble Villa Musica's almost-complete sonata set, with pianist Kalle Randalu, is unavailable). On BIS, Roland Pöntinen is accompanist for three rival accounts. In the 1935 Violin Sonata, Wallin may now have been overtaken by Zimmermann, Becker-Bender and now Isabelle Faust but choice will depend primarily on couplings since the margins between these contenders is so fine.

So, too, with the others, though Wendy Warner remains peerless in the Cello Sonata despite a fine challenger here from Rudin. I would not want to be without Lindberg's Trombone Sonata, though BIS's sound is a tad over-resonant. Costes's superb interpretation is the finest since Antonsen's, accompanied by Sawallisch (EMI – sadly nla), and certainly a match for Laubin's. I prefer Costes to Tine Thing Helseth's driven account with Kathryn Stott, in a comparatively fierce recording. In short then, this is a magnificent disc, with leading or contending versions of all the works in terrific, beautifully balanced Harmonia Mundi sound. Let's hope Melnikov & Co return to record some more. Guy Rickards

Althorn, Thn & Tpt Sons – selected comparison: Various, Gould (3/93) (SONY) SM2K52671 Vc Son – selected comparison: Warner, Buck (BRID) BRIDGE9088 Vc & Thn Sons – selected comparison:

Vc & Ibn Sons – selected comparison Ostertag, Slokar, Randalu

(12/97) (MDG) MDG304 0697-2 Tbn & Tpt Sons – selected comparison:

Lindberg, Pöntinen, Tarr, Westenholz (3/94) (BIS) BIS-CD159

Tpt Son – selected comparisons:

Helseth, Stott (5/13) (EMI) 416471-2

Laubin, Randalu (MDG) MDG304 0696-2

Vn Son - selected comparisons:

Wallin, Pöntinen (8/96) (BIS) BIS-CD761

FP Zimmermann, Pace (9/13) (BIS) BIS-CD2024 Becker-Bender, Nagy (12/13) (HYPE) CDA68014

Ives · Mozart · Verdi

Ives String Quartet No 2 Mozart String Quartet No 21, K575 Verdi String Quartet Schumann Quartet

Ars Produktion © ARS38 156 (69' • DDD/DSD)



The Schumann
Quartet – not named
after Robert but after
the three brothers who

are its violinists and cellist – bring a distinctive style to this varied programme.

Their bold, forthright manner puts emphasis on clear articulation and strong dynamic contrasts. This approach works least well, perhaps, in the Mozart; it's a bright, lively performance, certainly, but detached notes can seem excessively short, with changes from *piano* to *forte* often overdone. The Quatuor Mosaïques, by contrast, bring out fully the *cantabile* nature of the themes. Where the Schumanns do this, particularly in the *Andante*, their playing has a truly appealing character.

The Schumann's highly dramatic style works wonders in the Ives. The 'Discussions' of the first movement and the 'Arguments' of the second come vividly to life, while the sense of intense elation towards the close of the finale is achieved with great power. The Blair Quartet, with a narrower expressive range, make the music appear less way-out and perhaps better unified but I can't help feeling that Ives would have approved of a more uncompromising manner.

It was instructive to compare this account of the Verdi with the Melos Quartet's 1998 recording. The Schumann's first movement gives the impression of an operatic conflict, the lyrical main themes contrasting violently with the agitated semiquaver figuration, whereas the Melos, with a more moderate manner, stress the movement's introspective character. But the Schumann approach can be seen as equally valid; and in the finale of the quartet they have the edge, their brilliant, devil-may-care attitude trumping the more careful Melos.

Duncan Druce

Ives – selected comparison:

Blair Qt (NAXO) 8 559178

Mozart – selected comparison:

Mosaiques Qt (5/99[®]) (NAIV) E8888

Verdi – selected comparison:

Melos Qt (8/00) (HARM) HMC90 1671

Krečič

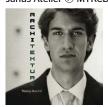
'Architexture'

Music for Strings: Antecessores. Violin Sonata. Oraculum. Cello Sonata. Imaginary Landscape of Mushrooms. Cantus modestus

Nejc Avbelj, Matija Krečič vns

Zoran Bičanin *vc* **Davorin Mori** *pf*

Mladi Ljubljanski Solisti Chamber Orchestra Janus Atelier © MTKCDOO1 (52' • DDD)



When new music can't be understood without the album notes, either the idiom is extremely

foreign or the composer's intentions aren't clear. Matija Krečič may have both problems. So many musical antecedents are



Bold and forthright: the Schumann Quartet bring drama to string quartets by Ives, Verdi and Mozart on their new recording for Ars Produktion

apparent, so many different directions are explored, that one is hard pressed to determine who he is. The first piece, *Music for Strings: Antecessores*, is a somewhat Shostakovian collage with intentionally clumsy, interruptive waltz-like sections, an extensive percussion-only passage and moments of repose echoing Bartók's night-music manner. The composer's willingness to try just about anything, including 12-tone methods, keeps any outward sense of unity at bay.

The five-movement Violin Sonata is full of brooding and mildly deranged folk fiddling, transition-free forays into parlour music and then leaps into the composer's own musical ozone, though manic dancelike passages and the final-movement fugue aren't sustained for very long. The twomovement Cello Sonata flails about at first, followed by a more brooding but not necessarily more attractive nocturnal movement. Finally, Imaginary Landscape of Mushrooms (a reference to John Cage's fascination with fungi) has only a minor debt to the 'Blues' movement of Ravel's Violin Sonata and has a good sense of beginning, middle and end, of ideas growing out of each other, plus some genuine wit. Cantus modestus is more promising, built on a simple, ghostly

scale with string-writing suggesting a viol consort – all with a sense of purpose lacking in the other works. So there's definitely talent there, though this disc is a bit of a false start. David Patrick Stearns

Nono

'Seguente'

A Carlo Scarpa^a. A Pierre^b. Guai ai gelidi mostri^c. La terra e la compagna^d. Caminantes... Ayacucho^e. No hay caminos, hay que caminar... Andrej Tarkowskij^f

dMargot Laminet sop eSusanne Otto mez
dAlbert Gassner ten bRoberto Fabbriciani bass fl
bCiro Scarpioni contrabass cl eFreiburg Soloists'
Choir; eVienna Concert Choir; dBavarian Radio
Symphony Chorus and Orchestra / Ernest Bour;
Ensemble Modern / Ingo Metzmacher; Frankfurt
Radio Symphony Orchestra / Friedrich Goldmann;
bcSWF Experimental Studio / CHans-Peter Haller;
SWF Symphony Orchestra / Michael Gielen
Edition RZ © 2 RZ1031/2 (118' • ADD/DDD)



There was a period in my life when I would regularly overdose on late-period Luigi

Nono. The all-encompassing scope of the music – Nono's internal dialogue between

ancient compositional principles and pure sonic speculation, between rigorous notation and vigilantly harnessed improvisation – provided a nourishing musical diet without the need for any supplements. Encountering many of these pieces again for the first time in over a decade I become aware of the indelible impression they leave. After a few notes I am again patrolling a familiar beat.

You wonder how Nono's 1985 Boulez homage, A Pierre (Dell'azzurro silenzio, inquietum) for voices, bass flute, contrabass clarinet and live electronics, could have taken any greater compositional risks; or how his No hay caminos, hay que caminar... Andrej Tarkowskij for seven coexisting orchestral groups (1987) pulls off such a daring conceptual feat; or how A Carlo Scarpa architetto, ai suoi infiniti possibili (1984), an orchestral work generating its 10-minute structure from the microtonal spectra of a single note, manages to sustain itself. Nono strips away every potentially superfluous or expressively overused gesture, leaving music that communicates largely through inference and implication, folding through the ether like a shadow's penumbra, obliging deep listening through the mists - judiciously differentiated detail evaporates as quickly as it appears.

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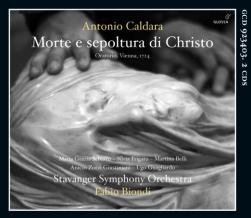
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Edition RZ specialises in radiophonic archaeology, plundering radio archives with the intention of assembling box-sets of buried treasure. The earliest recording here, from 1961, of *La terra e la compagna*, conducted by Ernest Bour, shows its analogue age, and the bright reverb-boomy digital recordings, from the 1990s, of *Caminantes...Ayacucho* and *No hay caminos* arrive as a pleasing jolt; and each recording adds something meaningful to our appreciation of Nono.

This A Pierre (Dell'azzurro silenzio, inquietum) is noticeably speedier than the long-available Ricordi version. A Carlo Scarpa is heard in an earlier, clearer studio recording from 1986 by Michael Gielen and the Baden-Baden SWF Symphony Orchestra – their live 1989 performance, as released by Montaigne-Naïve (12/00), was never the cleanest; while Guai ai gelidi mostri and Caminantes... Ayacucho, epic multiverse canvases involving voices, instruments and live electronics, are again offered in alternate views from 'official' recordings on NEOS and Kairos (4/09, 6/08).

Nono prevents A Pierre's textural murmurs and sighs from becoming decoratively ambient by the sheer life-force of his subtly destabilising harmony - and as these compositional boundaries are clarified, the interpretative leeway between the two versions, the pacing of material and of microtonal inclines in particular, becomes clear. The extended Guai ai gelidi mostri, on texts from a number of sources, Ezra Pound, Ovid and Nietzsche included, has a more conventionally dramatic surface; climaxes and moments of arrival puncture the flow. But you realise that's just the outer shell - underneath lines weave themselves into the cracks, decaying into tense and unresolved silences. Philip Clark

Piazzolla

Ángel Suite. Chiquilín de Bachín. Escualo. Histoire du Tango. Tango-Etude No 3. Valsisimo Lucia Lin vn Ann Hobson Pilot hp

JP Jofre bandoneón

Harmonia Mundi (F) HMU90 7627 (50' • DDD)



Piazzolla's music is remarkably open to arrangement, its vibrant *tango nuevo*

rhythms and clean sonorities transferring convincingly to most instruments. Some are more obvious candidates than others – Piazzolla's own, the bandoneón, of course, and the violin – but the harp? The resonant sound of harp strings might seem as

inimical to Piazzolla's trademark writing as, say, the organ, but in Ann Hobson Pilot's hands it sounds very natural. That is also a tribute to the skill of the arrangers and all the music here, even the third of his six *Tango-Etudes*, originally written for unaccompanied flute but played here on the violin.

Ann Hobson Pilot was for four decades a harpist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. She plays Piazzolla here as if born to it and the partnership with violinist Lucia Lin is enchanting, as in Kari Vehmanen's arrangement of *Histoire du Tango*. There is a danger, for sure, that the harp's consonant sonority prettifies the textures, masking the darker undercurrents in Piazzolla's writing; Michael Maganuco's arrangement of the well-known *Valsisimo* is a case in point, spilling over into the saccharine.

The addition of the bandoneón itself, heard in the opening *Escualo* and closing *Ángel Suite* (both arranged by Maganuco in collaboration with the bandoneónist, here, JP Jofre), negates this tendency. Both works catch that typically Piazzollan combination of the sweet and the seamy very nicely indeed, and the performances (throughout, indeed) are impeccable. Good sound, too. **Guy Rickards**

Rachmaninov



Symphonic Dances, Op 45°. Suites - No 1, Op 5°; No 2, Op 17°. Six Duets, Op 11d. Romance and Waltz°. Russian Rhapsodyf

^{abcd}Martha Argerich pf with ^eAnton Gerzenberg, ^eDaniel Gerzenberg, ^aNelson Goerner,

^fAlexander Mogilevsky, ^cGabriela Montero, $^{
m bdef}$ Lilya Zilberstein pf

Warner Classics (§) 2 2564 62359-4 (119' • DDD) Recorded live at the Lugano Festival, 2003-09 From EMI b267051-2 (6/09); c358472-2; d562970-2; ef607367-2



All these recordings derive from performances at Martha Argerich's

annual Lugano Festival made between 2003 and 2009. Apart from their original release, most of them have appeared on other (mixed-composer) compilations, so dedicated Rachmaninov and/or Argerich fans will have them already. But this is, I think, the first time that one performance from the festival of every work Rachmaninov wrote for two pianists has been issued together.

It is, though, rather more than a convenient repertoire compendium because, taken overall, there are few finer versions anywhere of each title. Argerich has been playing the major works here (Symphonic Dances and the two Suites) for years and has recorded them with other favoured partners (Rabinovitch, Freire and Economou among others). There is not much to choose between them but the Lugano recordings have the advantage of the lively, rounded acoustic of the Stelio Molo auditorium and the undoubted benefit of having an audience present. Moreover, Nelson Goerner, in the only performance new to disc, brings more colour and depth to his playing than either Rabinovitch or Economou in the Symphonic Dances (especially in the central 'Valse'), while Lilva Zilberstein's nightingale in 'La nuit' from Suite No 1 is simply enchanting. Suite No 2 with Gabriela Montero is not as frantic as Argerich's earlier accounts yet remains just as thrilling.

Disc 2 (40'04") has four less substantial works, though Zilberstein and Argerich playing one piano four hands in the Six Duets (the earliest Lugano recording of this set) make you wonder why we don't hear Rachmaninov's Op 11 more often. Argerich leaves the stage for the two short works for piano six hands, Romance in A (with its prescient glimpse of the Second Concerto) and Waltz in A, in which Zilberstein is joined by her two sons. And it is Zilberstein not Argerich who partners Alexander Mogilevsky in another early work, the rarely heard Russian Rhapsody in E minor for two pianos. All in all, a Rachmaninov-fest to savour. Jeremy Nicholas

Stenhammar

String Quartets - No 1, Op 2; No 2, Op 14

Stenhammar Quartet

BIS (6) . BIS2019 (62' • DDD/DSD)



The Stenhammars conclude the firstever complete cycle of their namesake's

quartets on disc with characteristically energetic and well-explored readings of his first two essays in the genre. Because of this composer's musical education we come nearer to the prime influence of Brahms. But paradoxically, like the performers themselves, Stenhammar frequently shows off here how alive he is to the world of his time with his sudden key shifts (the C major first movement's almost immediate move from the home key to B, or its finale's beginning in F minor) and concentration on motif fragments (in the Second's first movement) rather than whole themes.

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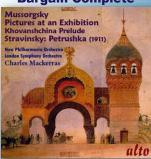
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Standing up for Stenhammar: the composer's namesake ensemble completes its cycle of the Swede's six string quartets for BIS

Innovation in late-19th/early-20thcentury scores is often logged as a combination of harmonic and formal anticipation with traditional forms. Stenhammar's quartet-writing really makes this technique audible. If, despite those motivic fragments, one could confidently date the Second's first movement to its actual period and Austro-German inheritance, the second movement, with its uneasy bass and searching violin lines, looks to a wholly other, more Scandinavian area. Similarly the essential jocundity (Haydn- or Beethoven-like) of the Scherzo is regularly interrupted by slower pauses to dwell on darker colours. In the finale Stenhammar plays interestingly with an incomplete jagged theme by splitting the quartet almost literally in half - two violins, viola and cello – an effect clearer, if less exciting, in the significantly slower rival performance from the Copenhagen Quartet (Caprice, 10/83). On balance, though – as throughout the programme and, indeed, their three-disc cycle (11/13, 1/14) – I would prefer the riskier and more colourful Stenhammars. Mike Ashman

'The English Phantasy'

Bridge Phantasie String Quartet **Goossens** Phantasy String Quartet, Op 12

Holbrooke First Quartet Fantasie, Op 17b Holst Phantasy on British Folksongs, Op 36 Howells Phantasy String Quartet, Op 25 Hurlstone Phantasie String Quartet Bridge Quartet

EM Records (F) EMRCD025 (69' • DDD)



Given the richness and uniqueness of much of the chamber music motivated by the

Cobbett Competition (instigated in 1905), it is surprising that some of these important cyclic works have never been recorded before (namely those of Hurlstone, Holst and Goossens). Three of the works, by Hurlstone, Bridge and Holbrooke, were among the six finalists for the 1905 competition and reveal a real fecundity of invention. Hurlstone's is a true masterpiece of construction and conception. Here it is evident that the composer was moving into a new stylistic phase which not only drew on the organicism of Brahms but also on the irony of Mahler (eminently portrayed by the droll quotation and incorporation of the opening material of Liszt's B minor Sonata). The Bridge Phantasie, a tripartite design, is also a fine work, full of

melancholy romantic ardour, while Holbrooke's discursive essay, also in three parts (inspired by Beethoven's *Les adieux*), is a work that deserves more exposure.

Goossens's Phantasy, a more astringent piece in a more overtly modernist idiom and having more to do with Ravel and Stravinsky, was entered for the 1915 competition. Holst's and Howells's Phantasies were products of the 1917 competition which stipulated trios and quartets with folksong as the base material. Holst's Phantasy was ultimately withdrawn and termed by the composer a 'guilty secret' (probably a wise decision, though the work is not without interest); Howells's work, which won second prize, espoused a structure closer to the Elizabethan 'Fancy' and is a prodigious process of contrasting tempi and thematic transformations ranging from idyllic pastoral to ecstatic dance. The Bridge Quartet approach these pieces with a sympathetic and insightful warmth, and confirm their ambassadorial credentials for British chamber music. A lovely, radiant CD. Jeremy Dibble

'Romance oubliée'

Glazunov Elégie, Op 44 **Kodály** Adagio **Kreisler** Romance. Aucassin et Nicolette **Liszt** Romance



Instrumental soloists

VIOLIN

Viviane Hagner

Barnabás Kelemen

Anthony Marwood

Callum Smart

Matthew Trusler

CELLO

Marie-Elisabeth Hecker

Laura van der Heijden

GUITAR

Julian Bream

CLARINET

Michael Collins

PIANO

Julian Clef

Benjamin Grosvenor

Nicolas Hodges

Yu Kosuge

Piers Lane

Olli Mustonen

Garrick Ohlsson

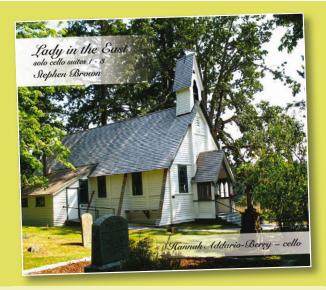
Martin Roscoe

Main Office 25 City Road, Cambridge, CB1 1DP, UK Tel. +44 (0)1223 312400 Fax. +44 (0)1223 460827

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oubliée, S527 **Sitt** Sechs Albumblätter, Op 39 **Vierne** Deux Pièces **Vieuxtemps** Elégie, Op 30 **Wieniawski** Rêverie

Tabea Zimmermann *va* **Thomas Hoppe** *pf* Myrios © MYRO14 (64' • DDD/DSD)



This collection of Romantic pieces is remarkable for the outstanding quality

of the playing. Tabea Zimmermann and Thomas Hoppe give every indication of enjoying the music and it's evident that they have given much thought to the essential character of each piece. In the set of *Albumblätter* by Hans Sitt, every movement has a sharply defined personality – No 1 resonant and mellifluous, No 2 with a more plaintive tone, and so on. For such a little-regarded composer, the music comes over as surprisingly absorbing and rewarding.

The main emphasis of the recital is to present the viola as an inward-looking, melancholy voice; the titles - two romances, two élégies, plus a rêverie and a légende strongly suggest an introspective ambience. But within this general mood there is plenty of contrast; from the spare, elusive outlines of Liszt's Romance oubliée to the theatrical. highly emotional manner of Vieuxtemps's Elégie. In such a strongly felt, brilliantly executed performance as this, I find the Vieuxtemps entirely irresistible. There are some true rarities - the delicate Vierne pieces and the Wieniawski – all well worth reviving.

Of the two Kreisler pieces, the only music not originally conceived for viola (the Kodály is designed equally for violin, viola or cello), the *Romance* creates a remarkable impression, due to the luminosity and refinement of Zimmermann's tone in the extreme high register; this contrasts most effectively with the lightness and grace of *Aucassin et Nicolette*. Altogether, it's a fascinating programme, with wonderful performances.

Duncan Druce

'La vida breve'

Assad Menino Cassadó Requiebros Falla
La vida breve. Siete Canciones populares
españolas Gardel Volver Gismonti Agua e vinho
Granados Danzas españolas - Oriental.
Goyescas - Intermezzo Lara Granada
Piazzolla Libertango. Nightclub 1960. Oblivion
Ravel Pièce en forme de habanera
Nadège Rochat vc Rafael Aguirre gtr
Ars Produktion © ARS38 159 (63' • DDD/DSD)



What initially looks like a marginally relevant disc turns out to be a deceptively

smart, feel-good collection that also solves the not inconsiderable problem of translating tango-related music to the cello. Back in the 1990s, when lots of mainstream classical artists were discovering Ástor Piazzolla (the industry joke was 'Have you heard the Maria Callas tango record?'), the music survived over-cultivated performances, if just barely.

Nadège Rochat strategically employs fluid fingerings, stays close to the instrument's upper range and keeps vibrato to a minimum, assuring that little artifice intrudes on the music. In the more classical portion of the disc, namely Falla's Siete Canciones populares españolas, the cellist inflects the line with the kind of shadings that keep one from missing the words usually heard in this music. In fact, Rochat makes the most of the instrument's capabilities by showing what interpretative touches are possible when not limited by a vocalist's breath control. In many ways, this is Baroque performance practice with some extravagant finger slides and an irreverent attitude.

The catalyst to this disc's unassuming success is guitarist Rafael Aguirre. The smaller sound palette of the instrument plus its obvious roots in Spanish culture creates a sort of common denominator that deflates, say, the Intermezzo from Granados's opera Goyescas without losing its charming essence, and distils Ravel's *Habanera* (perhaps a bit too much, actually), making such a work appropriate company with the more vernacular Piazzolla, Assad and the mainstream pop of Lara's 'Granada'. Though the guitar is standing in for everything from piano to opera orchestra, Aguirre sounds perfectly at home throughout. The warmth and specificity of expression in this disc are such that nobody's winter should be without it.

David Patrick Stearns

'Winds & Piano'

Beethoven Quintet for Piano and Winds, Op 16
Caplet Quintet for Piano and Winds Farrenc
Sextet, Op 40 Mozart Quintet for Piano
and Winds, K452 Poulenc Sextet, Op 100
Rimsky-Korsakov Quintet for Piano and
Winds Roussel Divertissement, Op 6
Thuille Sextet, Op 6
Les Vents Français with Eric Le Sage pf



Two favourites (of mine, at any rate) frame this three-CD set of wind-ensemble

pieces from Les Vents Français. The fact that they are also superbly played and instinctively characterised from the stylistic point of view should not be a cause for surprise when you see that the group of players comprises such illustrious musicians as the flautist Emmanuel Pahud, clarinettist Paul Meyer, oboist François Leleux and bassoonist Gilbert Audin, with Radovan Vlatković on horn and Eric Le Sage on piano. This is a positive dream team, who not only capture the music's individual spirit but also clearly enjoy doing so.

They start off with Poulenc's Sextet of 1932, a work that has the capacity to win over even the most impatient Poulencsceptic with its joie de vivre and its blend of charm and effervescence. Then at the end of the recital comes Rimsky-Korsakov's Quintet of 1876, dating to the time when Rimsky, having been appointed inspector of naval bands, steeped himself in a study of wind instruments and produced not only this Quintet but also the concertos for trombone, oboe and clarinet. He was not, perhaps, as assured in his writing for piano. The Quintet is a work with flaws; but in a generous performance such as this one from Les Vents Français they are effectively disguised so that the first movement, for instance, comes across with the brio Rimsky must have intended rather than being bogged down, as can sometimes happen, by the piano's weightiness. Even the dutiful fugue in the central movement is given mellifluous shape and thoughtful colouring here.

The second disc is the centrepiece of the set with its exceptionally well-defined and balanced interpretations of Mozart's pianoand-wind Quintet of 1784 and Beethoven's of 1796. But there are some rarities here, too. In the piano-writing of her 1852 C minor Sextet, the French composer Louise Farrenc reveals her debt to the likes of Hummel but the woodwind instruments are likewise treated considerately and with alertness to timbre, particularly in a beguiling slow movement. The Quintet (1899) by André Caplet perhaps shows why he is more famous as a friend and orchestrator of Debussy, and Ludwig Thuille's B flat Sextet (1888) cannot really shake off an influence from Brahms. But the set as a whole is a compelling compendium of creative variety unified by matchless musicianship. Geoffrey Norris

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Warner Classics (3) 3 2564 62318-5 (179' • DDD)

Sviatoslav Richter

Jed Distler looks at the career and recordings of one of the greatest pianists of the 20th century, a performer whose range of repertoire was as large as it was idiosyncratic

that the mechanical process involved

becomes all but invisible' - Glenn Gould

reat pianists often have one trait that dominates others: Sergey Rachmaninov's left-hand thrusts,

Alfred Cortot's rubato, Vladimir Horowitz's thundering sonority, Glenn Gould's *détaché* articulation, and so forth. By contrast, Sviatoslav Richter was something of a stylistic Zelig,

a chameleon who couldn't be pigeonholed. He called himself 'a normal human being who happens to play the piano', yet his artistry often provoked contradictory reactions.

For example, Gould wrote that Richter was the kind of musician who achieves 'such a perfect liaison with the instrument that the mechanical process involved becomes all but invisible...and the performer, and consequently the

listener, is then able to ignore all superficial questions of virtuosity or instrumental display and concentrate instead on the spiritual qualities inherent in the music itself. Yet New York Times critic Bernard Holland offered the opposite observation: With his proclivity for colour and sonority, Richter surrenders to the primary tenet of the Soviet school: that the instrument dictates the style of performance and that when music and that style clash, music must adjust.'

Nor could one pin down Richter's interpretations. In Schubert, Richter would take agonisingly slow and searching tempi for the sixth of the Moments musicaux and the opening movements of the piano sonatas in C (D840), G (D894) and B flat (D960). Yet he'd plough through the Wanderer Fantasy and the first movement of the Sonata in D (D850) with determined ferocity. Or Beethoven. For every reticent, rounded-off

Tempest Sonata and slow-motion Op 14 No 1 Allegretto, you'd get an Appassionata coda that took off like a bat

out of hell. Different 'Such a perfect liaison with the instrument recordings of the same works often revealed more than one Richter. solid and well-played studio traversal of Mussorgsky's

> Pictures at an Exhibition next to the electrifying 1958 Sofia concert version – dim sound, finger slips and all.

Richter marched to his own drum from the start. Born on March 20, 1915, in Zhytomyr, Ukraine, the pianist more or

One only has to compare the

less taught himself, and developed into an uncanny sightreader who preferred devouring opera scores at first glance than woodshedding piano repertoire – a far cry from the disciplined practice habits of

Richter's maturity. When the family moved to Odessa, the teenage Richter helped make ends meet by working in nightclubs, factories, nursing homes, collective farming associations, and as an accompanist for amateur singers, circus acts, silent films and everything in between.

After trying his hand at an all-Chopin recital, Richter decided to seriously pursue a concert career. He moved to Moscow and auditioned for one of the Moscow Conservatory's most soughtafter teachers, Heinrich Neuhaus. Despite Richter's lack of experience and training, Neuhaus immediately perceived his unusual talents. 'He freed my hands, and freed me from a very harsh sound I produced,' Richter recalled of his teacher in a 1986 interview. 'Above all, he taught me the meaning of silence and the meaning of singing.'

By the 1940s and '50s Richter's reputation loomed

DEFINING MOMENTS

• January 18, 1943 – premieres Prokofiev's Seventh Sonata in Moscow

Richter met Prokofiev through Neuhaus and remained a lifelong advocate of the composer. He learned the Seventh Sonata in four days prior to giving its first performance.

•October – December 1960 *– First North American tour* Richter criss-crossed the continent to sold-out houses, standing ovations and rave reviews, despite his claim to have been in a state of 'almost permanent panic'. In later years Richter was quoted to say that he only liked three things about America: the cocktails, the art galleries and the orchestras.

•1964 – Tours Festival

Searching the Loire Valley for a festival venue, Richter fell in love with the Grange de Meslay, a majestic monastic building dating as far back as the ninth century and originally constructed for agricultural use. With concert promoter Jacques Leiser, Richter launched the festival's first concerts in the summer of 1964, where he collaborated for the first time with the violinist David Oistrakh.

• 1981 – December Nights at Moscow's Pushkin Museum Inaugurates annual concert series around thematic ideas where music, visual art and literature came together. One festival dedicated to English music and painters featured Britten's operas Albert Herring and The Turn of the Screw, both staged by Richter.

•1986 – Siberian tour

At 71, Richter showed no signs of slowing down with age. On July 20 he embarked on an extensive six-month concert tour by car through Siberia, stopping in Japan along the way. He played everywhere from large cities to small distant towns not accustomed to hosting concerts.



large within the Soviet Union and Communist bloc countries, particularly for his unusually wide and eclectic repertoire. In fact, Richter drew attention for what he did not play. The pianist felt no obligation to programme or record complete cycles, except for Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier over four nights. Richter programmed many Beethoven sonatas, yet steered clear of two favourites: the Waldstein and the Moonlight. Of Beethoven's five piano concertos, Richter only played the First and Third. He programmed and recorded Brahms's Second Concerto

but never the First. Most of Chopin's Etudes figured on Richter's concerts but not the 'Black Key' or the 'Octave'.

In May 1960 Richter played his first Western concert in Helsinki, and in October embarked on his first tour of the United States, highlighted by a series of Carnegie Hall programmes that quickly put him on the international map. The pianist's

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



'Sviatoslav Richter - The Sofia Recital 1958' Phillips M → 464 734-2PM (6/60°)

career expanded further throughout Western Europe and Japan but avoided North America after 1970. By the late 1980s Richter had established a pattern of touring small, intimate venues with his Yamaha grand in tow, always playing from the score.

It may be far-fetched to draw parallels between this pianist and a rock band, but in many respects Sviatoslav Richter was the Grateful Dead of classical pianists. Each amassed a faithful cult following, yet broached the limelight

with trepidation. Each released successful studio recordings, yet truly flourished with an audience present. Hundreds of live recordings beyond the 'official' releases continue to circulate. By the time Richter and the Dead gave their respective last concerts in 1995, both were living legends, ragged around the edges, to be sure, yet the flashes of greatness were worth it.

For more on Richter at 100, see page 94

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Instrumental



Rob Cowan delves into a Menuhin celebration spanning eight DVDs:

'The warmth of tone, fire, intensely expressive vibrato and frequent rushes of emotion are all quite marvellous' > REVIEW ON PAGE 69



Jeremy Nicholas on a second disc of Stanford from Durham:

'Daniel Cook received his early education on this very instrument and inhabits the idiom with aplomb' > REVIEW ON PAGE 72

JS Bach · Ysaÿe

JS Bach Solo Violin Sonata No 1, BWV1001. Solo Violin Partita No 2, BWV1004 Ysaÿe Solo Violin Sonatas, Op 27 - No 1; No 2 Antje Weithaas vn

AVI-Music (F) AVI8553320 (62' • DDD)



The overt references to the Bach unaccompanied works for violin in Eugène

Ysaÿe's Solo Sonatas mean that the pairing of the two is neither a new idea nor difficult to find. But a disc that is unsullied by third parties and leaves Bach and Ysaÿe alone to thrash out their ideas is rarer, and enticing. Further, the combination on this first volume of the two by the German violinist Antje Weithaas is a good one: she has bookended the first two Ysaÿe sonatas those most blatantly influenced by Bach with the First Sonata and the Second Partita, the most important examples of each type from the unaccompanied violin works. It also means the disc opens with the Adagio of the G minor Sonata and ends with the Chaconne of the D minor Partita - two of the most affecting movements in the solo violin repertoire.

Weithaas expresses that the Ysaÿe sonatas are in part performed here in order to give them some status, other than that of showpiece, which they don't currently enjoy. The considerable number of mainstream recordings made of the complete set over the past five years suggests that her perception is slightly behind the times. Nevertheless, it is particularly exciting and refreshing to hear Weithaas in true isolation with her beautiful and varied tone (on her modern Greiner violin, which she plays with extraordinary skill of compensation, especially when maintaining the heavy poise of the Chaconne) and absolutely meticulous technique. Most of all, you can hear her complex thinking clearly evidenced in the light but ever-present dance lilt in all Bach's movements, despite their musical and intellectual gravitas. The subtlety with

which she brings out the many layers of dialogue in the Bach and the noticeable contrast in the Ysaÿe, where she skilfully references the former composer's works but at the same time addresses the latter's as compositions with many points to make, is striking and moving: points that are not simply about virtuosity either but, for instance, the challenge of continuity of thought in the face of intense distraction, as in 'Les Furies' at the close of the Second Sonata. Caroline Gill

JS Bach

'Imagine'

Suite, BWV997. Sonata, BWV964. Solo Violin Partita No 2, BWV1004 - Chaconne (transcr Brahms). Solo Flute Partita, BWV1013 (transcr Delplace). Italian Concerto, BWV971. Adagio, BWV968

Jean Rondeau hpd

Erato © 2564 62200-9 (80' • DDD)



Jean Rondeau's programme largely consists of Bach works for other

instruments, transcribed for harpsichord by the composer and others. Rondeau evidently listens as well as he plays. The opening C minor Suite's four movements are shaped with character, specificity and impressive hand independence. In Bach's transcription of his A minor Violin Sonata, Rondeau's deliberately decorative Adagio and Allegro markedly contrast with Andreas Staier's faster, more rhythmically orientated treatments (Warner, 12/98). Rondeau's slower pace and subtle finger legato in the Fugue relate more to violin phrasing, although the sustained resonance of the Andante's bass notes proudly shows off his instrument's vibrant lung power; here I slightly prefer Staier's understated lute stop.

Brahms's piano transcription of the D minor Violin Partita's Chaconne for left hand alone works surprisingly well on the harpsichord, abetted by Rondeau's stylish rhythmic liberties and ability to translate pedal effects through fingerwork and voicing. Via Stéphane Delplace's reworking, the A minor Solo Flute Partita becomes fleshed out with convincingly Bachian counterpoint and filled-in harmonies. The thick textures of Bach's own G major Solo Violin Sonata Adagio transcription gain breathing space and gravitas through Rondeau's expansive continuity. He expertly projects the Italian Concerto's solo/tutti designations, yet his fastidious articulation slightly sacrifices forward impetus when measured alongside kindred conceptions from Scott Ross and Kenneth Gilbert. The warm, full-bodied and well-balanced recorded sound further enhances Rondeau's thoughtful artistry.

Jed Distle

Italian Conc – selected comparisons: Gilbert (2/90^R) (HARM) HMD990 9036 Ross (APEX) 8573 89224-2

Bartolotti

'Music for a Queen' Secondo libro di chitarra - Suites - in C; in D; in D minor. Passacaglie in G. Folia in G minor **Fredrik Bock** *baroque gtr*

LAWO Classics (F) LWC1065 (64' • DDD)



The Italian composer Angelo Michele Bartolotti, who died sometime after 1668

and who was closely associated with the court of Queen Christina of Stockholm, seems to have been admired chiefly for his theorbo-playing, especially in France. But it is the second of his two books of Baroque guitar music which interests us here.

Published in Rome in 1665, Bartolotti's *Secondo libro di chitarra* contains sets of fastidiously notated passacaglias, preludes and shorter French dances from which the performer may assemble his or her own suites. This is precisely what Fredrik Bock has done for this, his debut solo recording. Opening with a beautiful G major *Passacaglie*, he then proceeds to serve up

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three dance suites, each of which is prefaced by a prelude and concluded with a passacaglia or chaccone; a standalone G minor *Folia* is a bonus.

Like the Scottish guitarist and lutenist Gordon Ferries in the same repertoire, Bock favours the middle way. He is not afraid to allow a more romantic sensibility to colour the sarabandes or the slower variations in the passacaglias. Nor does he hesitate to employ a cleaner sound more associated with a modern classical guitar to offset the distinctive resonance of the instrument, the idiomatic over-ringing of scale tones and arpeggiation of chords and contrasting brushed and percussive strumming. The result is playing of real depth and distinction. William Yeoman

Britten

Three Cello Suites
Olivier Marron VCSpektral (F) SRL4 13116 (68' • DDD)



As with the three string quartets, it is an interesting exercise to listen

to all three of Britten's cello suites in succession, charting his development as a composer. Unlike the quartets, the suites represent his expansion of a genre over a much more condensed period of seven years (between 1964 and 1971). They were written for Rostropovich; but, as he only recorded the first two, the position of Definitive Collection is still open.

Olivier Marron is technically impeccable and his performance of all three suites displays the sort of restraint without which it is hard to engage with the Britten that wrote them. He is particularly skilful at the opening in bringing out the inherent sadness in the First Suite. Indeed, the biggest challenge of that First Suite is to stay as temperate as possible in order to unlock its latent power. Marron manages this with admirable stillness and moves through the Second Suite with a maturity of aspect that allows the pieces to make the kind of sense they don't in the hands of every player. Even the Chaconne of the Second Suite is admirably handled – a discreet performance that allows Marron to keep within the limits of the piece and not wrestle with it to the injury of the tuning or musical thread. But that alone is not enough to carry one through the Third Suite; and if I have any criticism at all of this elegant disc, it is that there is a subtlety lacking in the dignified passion of the Third (and the Kontakion-like Passacaglia)

that is not in Jamie Walton's self-effacing version of 2013. Caroline Gill

Selected comparison:

Walton (A/13) (SIGN) SIGCD336

Chopin · **Debussy**

Chopin Ballade No 1, Op 23. Berceuse, Op 57. Fantaisie, Op 49. Scherzo No 4, Op 54 **Debussy** Pour le piano. Suite bergamasque **Sarah Beth Briggs** *pf*

Semaphore © SMLMP49 (75' • DDD)



Sarah Beth Briggs sandwiches Chopin between Debussy, an appropriate setting

when you consider Debussy's love of Chopin. Not only did he edit his music but he dedicated his late masterpiece, the 12 *Etudes*, to Chopin. Once more Briggs leaves you in no doubt concerning her integrity and affection. But if her technique is assured and her personality strong, she also has a tendency to stiffen into self-consciousness, to play as if in italics.

Debussy's early evanescence in his *Suite* bergamasque needs a more natural fluidity and stylistic elegance, a greater lightness, if it is not to become weighed down with inflection. Her Chopin, too, is too much of the studio, too overworked, making you stop to remember Cortot's prized spontaneity, his 'careless rapture' and his plea to his students ('improvise, lose yourself!'). In the First Ballade the playing is not to be confused with high-flyers such as Argerich or Annie Fischer. The Fourth Scherzo in particular needs more fantasy and freedom if its mercurial poetry is to take flight.

Briggs is finely recorded and her notes remind us not only that Debussy's *Suite bergamasque* is a tribute to Bergamo, that enchanting north Italian town, but that the second piece was originally titled 'Promenade sentimentale'. Would it have achieved its universal popularity if it had not been changed to 'Clair de lune'?

Bryce Morrison

Chopin

Waltzes - No 1, Op 18; No 2, Op 34 No 1; No 3, Op 34 No 2; No 4, Op 34 No 3; No 5, Op 42; No 6, 'Minute', Op 64 No 1; No 7, Op 64 No 2; No 8, Op 64 No 3; No 9, Op 69 No 1; No 10, Op 69 No 2; No 11, Op 70 No 1; No 12, Op 70 No 2; No 13, Op 70 No 3; No 14, Op *posth*. Mazurkas - No 42, Op 67 No 1; No 43, Op 67 No 2; No 44, Op 67 No 3; No 45, Op 67 No 4; No 46, Op 68 No 1; No 47, Op 68 No 2; No 48, Op 68 No 3

Jean-Marc Luisada pf

RCA Red Seal (F) 88875 02806-2 (73' • DDD)



Modern pianists who try to imitate the great Romantic keyboard giants often wind up

sounding like caricatures of the real thing. Take Jean-Marc Luisada, for instance, whose 1991 Chopin Waltzes cycle (DG, 5/91) abounded with mannered rubatos and coy phrasings. Still, there was a fluidity and joie de vivre that is often missing from his RCA remakes 22 years later. To give one example, the new F major Op 34 No 3's 'dog chasing its tail' right-hand patterns are meticulously voiced but they never quite soar as in the less poised yet more exciting earlier reading. The Minute Waltz features the same lingering tenutos of yore but less sparkling passagework. In Op 42, Luisada's former tempo shifts and eyebrow-raising tenutos return in a broader, legato-dominated context with mildly eccentric rather than endearingly goofy results. Would I trade the earlier Op 18's rhythmic lurches and exaggerated accents for Luisada's steadier yet choppier approach today? If Luisada positions Op 64 No 3 in more deliberate and contrived terms than before, he now synchronises his hands in Op 34 No 2 and turns in lyrically eloquent readings of the two minor-key Op 70 Waltzes.

Luisada recorded all 49 Chopin Mazurkas with opus numbers in 1992 (DG, 10/92). His 2008 RCA Mazurka cycle went no further than Op 63. Now he makes amends with Op 67's four pieces and the first three from Op 68. They resemble their *affettuoso* DG counterparts but with simpler detailing. Why the pianist omits Op 68 No 4 is anyone's guess. Jed Distler

Chopin

Preludes - Op 28; Op 45; KK IV*b* No 7. Impromptu No 3, Op 51. Three Mazurkas, Op 59 **Andrew Tyson** pf

Zig-Zag Territoires (F) ZZT347 (51' • DDD)



Ex-Curtis and Juilliard, Andrew Tyson won fifth prize at the 2012 Leeds

Competition. And now he enters a crowded arena with a programme centred around Chopin's Op 28 Preludes. That he has an affinity with the composer is immediately obvious and one of the most appealing aspects here is his sheer sound. Soulfulness, too, is in plentiful supply: in the well-paced 17th Prelude, for instance, or the Fourth,

where he withdraws into a true *pianissimo* to telling effect. And he brings out the filigree writing in the Third very effectively. There's no lack of technique either, as witness a Prelude such as No 17. However, there are times when poetry seems to be too much of a preoccupation: in something as cataclysmic as No 22 his is an altogether gentler creation than Sokolov's or, for that matter, Trifonov's.

But one aspect does bother me: he has a tendency to emphasise odd notes or phrases from within the texture. The Second Prelude, for instance, becomes all about the repeated G in the midst of the left-hand texture. How much more effective is Fliter's shaping of the dragging left hand here. Tyson's desynchronisation of the hands, too, is at times contrivedsounding: in the Sixth Prelude for example, where Fliter's apparent simplicity is so much more convincing. And then there's the shadow cast by Sokolov because once you've heard his dragging, grief-stricken way with this particular Prelude everyone else seems superficial.

However, of the remaining works, there's a suitably plaintive Op 45 Prelude, while the fluttering 1834 A flat major snippet is a real rarity. The Third Impromptu has charm, though Cortot, slightly quicker, is matchless here. And the Op 59 Mazurkas are by turns subtle and chewy. This is a disc that promises much if Tyson can rein in those textural peccadilloes. Harriet Smith

Preludes – selected comparisons: Trifonov (12/13) (DG) 479 1728GH Fliter (11/14) (LINN) CKD475 Sokolov (2/15) (DG) 479 4342GH2 Impromptu No 3 – selected comparison: Cortot (EMI) 361541-2

Faulkes

Faulkes Festival Prelude on 'Ein' feste Burg'. Fantasia. Scherzo symphonique concertant. Theme (Varied). Barcarolle. Concert Overture. Fantasia on Old Welsh Airs. Légende and Finale Rubinstein Mélodie (arr Faulkes)

Duncan Ferguson org

Delphian © DCD34148 (75' • DDD)

Played on the organ of St Mary's Episcopal
Church, Edinburgh



William Faulkes (1863-1933), a near-contemporary of Elgar and a fine

concert organist in his own right, spent most of his career working in his native Liverpool, in particular his 46-year tenure at St Margaret's, Anfield.

Although there is nothing in his vast compositional output which would scare the horses at the local racetrack, his oeuvre is worthy of reassessment. He could have wished for no more persuasive an advocate than Duncan Ferguson nor a finer instrument than this glorious (and historically 'correct') 'Father' Willis/ Harrison and Harrison. Over 500 organ works were published. There are several hundred other pieces still in manuscript, including a string quintet, a string octet and piano and violin concertos. Twicemarried, Faulkes named his youngest child John Sebastian and enjoyed the advocacy of Lemare, Hollins (to whom the Concert Overture in E flat is dedicated) and Guilmant, for whom the sturdy Fantasia was composed. Such was his reputation that before and after the Great War Faulkes journeyed several times to Germany to record player rolls for the Welte Company.

Faulkes's idiom is diatonically stolid and workmanlike, if rather self-effacing in quieter moments. The highlights on this disc include the sturdily virile Festival Prelude on 'Ein feste Burg' and the charming Barcarolle – really a technical study in sixths – which has echoes of Widor. As an example of the transcriber's art, Faulkes's treatment of Rubinstein's Mélodie in F is handled with great delicacy, with some alluring use of the tremulants. The booklet is informative though lacking a photograph of the composer. Malcolm Riley

Foccroulle

'Works for Historic Organs' Toccata. Kolorierte Flöten. Nigra sum^a. O quam pulchra es. Capriccio sopra re-fa-mi-sol. Spiegel **Bernard Foccroulle** *org* with

^aAlice Foccroulle sop ^aLambert Colson cornett Aeon © AECD1440 (58' • DDD)



From a renowned champion and awardwinning interpreter of the north German

Baroque repertory, it comes as something of a shock to encounter this cycle of contemporary compositions by the Belgian organist Bernard Foccroulle. The music dates from 2001-12 and was recorded over three years on five historic instruments. Inspired by the exceptional beauty of these organs (the oldest of which contains pipes from 1614), Foccroulle had the challenge of writing stimulating music for instruments of limited compass and numbers of stops, as well as the exotic possibilities provided by unequal temperament. It helps that they are all

situated in spacious, atmospheric acoustics and that they are exquisitely voiced.

The main work is Spiegel (2005), which consists of six verses 'in dialogue with Arnold Schlick's Salve regina'. Here Foccroulle's jumbled-up Renaissance-like gestures make a stark juxtaposition to the 15th-century Gregorian melody. The use of mutation stops in 'Ad te suspiramus' is a real ear-cleanser! Coloured Flutes of two years later is more satisfying, whereby he creates a memorable 'aviary' through the use of high-pitched flute pipes. The Toccata, composed in homage to Buxtehude, is perhaps overlong but the same cannot be said of the magnificent Nigra sum of 2012, in which Foccroulle is joined by his daughter Alice (a soprano in Herreweghe's Collegium Vocale Gent) and Lambert Colson, who provides an extra, antiquated 'stop', the cornett, which lends this highly organised music a Garbarekian flavour. A stimulating release. Malcolm Riley

Hahn

'Le rossignol éperdu' Première Suite. Orient. Carnet de voyage. Versailles **Billy Eidi** pf Timpani (§) 2 2C2229 (131' • DDD)



'Le rossignol éperdu' is to Hahn what *Lieder* ohne Worte is to Mendelssohn and *Lyric*

Pieces to Grieg. It is a set of 53 short piano pieces, the earliest composed in 1899 when Hahn was in his mid-twenties, and completed in 1911. They were published in 1912 in four suites: Première Suite, Orient, Carnet de voyage and Versailles. The nightingale of the title is 'éperdu', translated variously as 'bewildered', 'distracted', 'ecstatic' or, in Timpani's opaque booklet, 'distraught'. The late Alistair Londonderry in his superior booklet-notes for Earl Wild's 2001 world premiere recording suggests that 'Perhaps this nightingale is all of these things. The collection can also be seen as a travel journal kept by a sensitive and sentimental melancholic.' 'Bewildering' certainly describes the range of poets, paintings and places that inspired Hahn, as well as the sheer variety of these 'poèmes pour piano' (the work's subtitle), the longest of which (No 3, 'Douloureuse rêverie dans un bois de sapins') lasts just over seven minutes in the hands of Billy Eidi, the shortest (No 14, 'Portrait') a mere 37 seconds.

Hahn's unique musical style is a deft amalgam of Massenet (his teacher), Fauré

66 GRAMOPHONE MARCH 2015



Fit for a Queen: Fredrik Bock plays Angelo Michele Bartolotti's fastidiously notated passacaglias, preludes and dances published in 1665 (review on page 64)

and even Debussy (of whom, however, Hahn was not an admirer), with nods along the way to Mendelssohn, the clavecinistes ('Les noces du duc de joyeuse') and others. Each number on its own is an exquisite gem and to hear a handful at a time is delightful; but I wonder if Hahn is best served by having the four suites presented in two lengthy tranches (disc 1 of 30 numbers, 73'36"; disc 2 of 23 numbers, 57'42"), despite the sensitive playing of Eidi (a French pupil of Magda Tagliaferro and a specialist in French Romantic keyboard music). That said, I like his version every bit as much as Wild's, both of them well recorded with appropriate intimacy. Jeremy Nicholas Selected comparison:

Wild (4/02) (IVOR) 72006

Lely

The Harmonics of Real Strings **Anton Lukoszevieze** *v.c*Another Timbre (£) AT70 (56' • DDD)



The austerity of presentation as favoured by the Another Timbre

label is doubtless intended to place emphasis wholly on the sound of the music therein, but a few words on the composer might not come amiss. Hailing from Norwich, John Lely has ploughed a productive furrow in the 'experimental' domain that has been central to British music throughout the post-war era. Relatively prolific and often performed, his output will be most familiar to those who frequent YouTube: *The Harmonics of Real Strings* has been championed by Anton Lukoszevieze over the past decade and his recording amply underlines the concept's inwardly focused intensity.

In the words of the composer, 'Essentially it is a very slow glissando along the full length of one bowed string. The player uses light finger pressure on the string in what is traditionally referred to as "harmonic" pressure'. Music, then, in which process is at least as crucial as its ultimate destination – though the outcome is no less considered than in similarly reductive or slow-burning pieces by such (very different!) figures as Scelsi or Feldman. Presented here are four realisations - progressively decreasing in overall duration and, revealingly, numbered in reverse order (hence from IV to I). Heard thus, the effect is of a subtly

incremental increase in expressive velocity — as if the sound were gaining all the while in momentum — though the prevailing quality is of an ethereal inwardness. Lukoszevieze renders it all with the requisite understatement, heard in a close and yet atmospheric setting wholly in accord with this music. Richard Whitehouse

Liszt

'Venezia e Napoli'

Canzone napoletana, S248. Der Gondelfahrer (Schubert, D809), S559. La lugubre gondola II, S200. Nuits d'été à Pausilippe, S399. RW - Venezia, S201. Soirées musicales de Rossini, S424 - No 2, La regata veneziana; No 4, La gita in gondola; No 9, La danza. Tarantella de César Cui, S482. Tarantella de Dargomijski, S483. Tarantella di bravura d'après la Tarantelle de 'La muette de Portici' d'Auber, S386. Variations sur 'Le Carnaval de Venise', S700a. Venezia e Napoli, S162

Costantino Catena pf

Camerata © @ CMCD15133/4 (106' • DDD)



Costantino Catena has performed the complete piano music of Liszt – a gargantuan •

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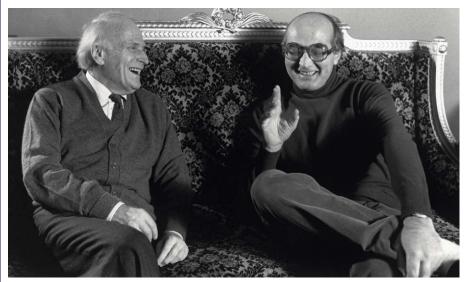
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MENUHIN ON FILM

Rob Cowan delves into a box-set gathering 18 hours of footage from Bruno Monsaingeon's celebrated portraits of the great violinist



Portrait of the artist: Yehudi Menuhin with film-maker Bruno Monsaingeon

f anyone had the ability to make great music meaningful on the widest possible scale it was Yehudi Menuhin, and this second volume of the 'Bruno Monsaingeon Edition' is in effect an epic celebration of a truly remarkable musician. The beauty of Monsaingeon's work is in its sensitive editing and immaculate pacing: filmed musical extracts are judiciously placed, conversation targeted to reflect key priorities in Menuhin's life (his sister Hephzibah, his open mind, his universalism) and important issues are given time to infiltrate our thoughts... Israel and Jerusalem being a case in point.

Some of the documentary footage in 'The Violin of the Century' (DVD1; extensive interview material also fills the eighth DVD), much of which is discussed at Menuhin's Mykonos home, is fascinating. We see part of the Brahms Concerto with Furtwängler, Celibidache greeting Menuhin in Berlin and fragments of the Beethoven Concerto as conducted by Colin Davis and Pablo Casals. Mozart with Karajan and a Bach cantata performed, in extract, by Menuhin, Fischer-Dieskau and Rostropovich is especially lovely, and various duo performances with Hephzibah, too. David Oistrakh is warmly embraced; Bartók is seen having a smoke and the story of how the commission of the Solo Violin Sonata came about (I'll leave you to discover it for yourself) is framed by musical

performances with Viktoria Postnikova and Adolph Baller. Other filmed encounters are with Wilhelm Kempff and Glenn Gould, specifically at the start of the slow movement of Beethoven's Tenth Violin Sonata, where Menuhin found Gould the more 'mystical' of the two pianists, commenting on his involvement as expressed not only through his playing but through his rapt facial expressions.

Encounters with Stéphane Grappelli are less than comfortable given that Menuhin sounds, and looks, stiff-jointed while Grappelli is as lissom and agile as he was in his thirties; and with Ravi Shankar, Menuhin tackling the rhythmic complexities of a raga and winning through more thoroughly than he did with Grappelli's loose-limbed jazz. How much more effective a 1955 fragment of Menuhin in duet with Duke Ellington in part of 'Come Sunday' from Black, Brown and Beige, one of the most affecting interpretations of anything from that tremendous piece by a non-jazzer. Menuhin is seen as a near-on 80-year-old standing on his head – pretty impressive - and the happy spectacle of his 'late' playing serves to offset the occasional jarring scrape of his bow, often a distraction on some of his later sound recordings. Those refined facial features, ascetic yet warm and sincere, seem to compensate visually for what's occasionally lacking in terms of sound. And of course Menuhin's underlying musicianship is never in doubt.

'Monsaingeon on Menuhin' is in effect an interview filmed in a record shop with brief illustrative shots (some of them already seen on DVD1), the questions posed in German, with English answers and French subtitles. Monsaingeon rates Menuhin and Glenn Gould as among the two most individual artists of the last century. His vivid descriptions of Menuhin's style, tone, technique (dazzlingly fluent when young, carefully retrained when older), his relationships with other musicians, overall character, working methods, family life and travel are fascinating, especially the latter, Russia being a lifelong obsession. On one visit Menuhin had boldly spoken publicly about the writer Solzhenitsyn and was escorted back to the border for his trouble. He didn't return until many years later. His performance of the Pathétique Symphony with the Leningrad Philharmonic is both respectful and moving.

Among the various concerto and chamber music performances featured, two stand out. One from 1987, recorded in Russia with the USSR Ministry of Culture Symphony Orchestra under Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, finds Menuhin on surprisingly good form (given his age) for a warmly felt account of Bartók's Second Violin Concerto. Only in the latter half of the second movement do things temporarily come to grief, otherwise the opening of the movement is played with great sensitivity and the first movement in particular is masterly. Rohzdestvensky's conducting is a model of clarity. He has the work 'sussed' and the concerto comes across as a genuine conversation piece, Menuhin watchfully attentive to what the orchestra is doing. But the real find, albeit flawed, is an undated film, with an unaccredited orchestra and conductor, of the last movement of Elgar's Concerto, although part of the film is blanked out and the final bars of the work are missing. But what a performance...easily the best we have from Menuhin beyond the one he did when he was 16 with Elgar himself on the rostrum. The warmth of tone, fire, intensely expressive vibrato, frequent rushes of emotion, and the rest...all quite marvellous. Lack of space precludes more in the way of comment, save to say that this is a truly exceptional collection, frequently revealing, and a worthy tribute to the manifold skills of both the subject and his brilliant on-screen producer. 6

THE RECORDING



Bruno Monsaingeon Edition, Vol 2 Yehudi Menuhin

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task - and his present two-CD album focuses on the two Italian cities closest to Liszt's heart. Central to his theme are the gondola songs of Venice and the whirling tarantella dances of Naples; and if it is true to say that there are no long-lost masterpieces, there is enough of interest to make the second disc, in particular, of absorbing interest.

Catena's choice confirms the journey from joyous sunlit confections to the darkdyed Romanticism and austerity of Liszt's final years, from 'exuberance of the heart' to 'bitterness of the heart' (Liszt). Those in love with high-flying virtuosity will look no further than the Tarantella di bravura d'après la Tarantelle de 'La muette de Portici', written to bring the house down and irritate composers of a less extravagant taste such as Mendelssohn and the Schumanns ('there is too much of the tinsel and the drum'). And if Catena hardly eclipses memories of Cziffra's scorching and embellished bravura, he jumps through the many circus hoops with grace and fluency. In extreme contrast, the Tarantella de César Cui (one of Liszt's very last compositions) is essentially a Mephisto dance, closely related to the world of the Waltzes and the late Hungarian Rhapsodies (Nos 16-19).

Catena is finely sensitive in RW-Venezia, capturing all of Liszt's desolation as he watched Wagner's funeral procession of gondolas glide down the Grand Canal ('he today, me tomorrow'), while in La lugubre gondola II there is again an eerie sense of how the most worldly of composers entered into a final phase alive with a sense of loss and guilt, of past indiscretion. Finally, the Venezia e Napoli suite takes us out once more into the light, though even here, in 'Canzone', a darker note is struck. Brvce Morrison

Liszt

G

Piano Sonata, S178. Années de pèlerinage annèe 2: Italie, S161 - Three Petrarch Sonnets; Après une lecture du Dante

Angela Hewitt pf

Hyperion (F) CDA68067 (75' • DDD)



Writing in her personal and engaging notes, Angela Hewitt tells us that Liszt's

B minor Sonata is 'quite simply one of the greatest works ever written for the piano by any composer' and, continuing, that it is music that makes you realise 'that our everyday worries are so trivial and unimportant'. And so it is in her superbly serious performance, one that eschews all

personal vanity, all preening mannerism and flamboyance but which, with strength in abundance, locates the still centre at the heart of Liszt's raging heroics. What enviable poise and expressive beauty to launch the central Andante, what muffled and sustained opening octaves (in this she follows both her own inclination and also Brendel's rather than Horowitz's sharp cutoff), what concentrated focus rather than a breathless hurtle through the final section's fugue. Her coda, too, breaths 'glassy sighs and threats'; and if there is one concession to display (a bass reinforcement), well, why not? Despite a catalogue brimming over with greatness - Horowitz (his early 1938 recording), Arrau, Brendel, Gilels, Argerich, Richter, et al - Hewitt holds her own to such an extent that she makes you forget all about odious comparisons and listen instead to one of the great milestones

If her Petrarch Sonnets and Dante Fantasia (Liszt's 'other' sonata) don't quite reach this exalted level, they are nonetheless front-rank performances. There is a richly inclusive sense in the Sonnets of ardour and reflection ('I fear, yet hope, I burn, yet am turned to ice' and 'I beheld on earth angelic grace'). Hewitt's Dante Sonata is a vibrant and intensely musical alternative to Volodos's stunning virtuoso recreation (Sony Classical, 6/10). Hyperion's sound and presentation are as immaculate as ever and there is ample breathing space between each item. This is possibly the very finest of Angela Hewitt's many recordings.

Bryce Morrison

Mussorgsky · Schumann

Mussorgsky Pictures at an Exhibition Schumann Fantasie, Op 17

Paul Lewis pf

Harmonia Mundi (F) HMC90 2096 (65' • DDD)



A number of highly cultivated pianists have been drawn to Mussorgsky's Pictures

over the past few years, among them Leif Ove Andsnes and Steven Osborne. Now Paul Lewis offers his take on this notoriously unpianistic masterpiece.

How you respond will depend on how your like your Pictures. Uncouth, with savagery lurking round every corner? Or a little more honed? You can tell much from the way an artist sets off on the first Promenade. Lewis has quite a spring in his step, and he emphasises the sense of leading to each Picture by not tracking the Promenades separately. His 'Gnomus' is

less grotesque than some, Kissin in particular playing up the character's unpredictable violence. Lewis is touching, though, in his portrait of quarrelling children in the Tuileries Gardens, though I particularly like Osborne here, who gives the sense that this is a sly, digging kind of dispute. Lewis's 'Bydło' is faster than Osborne's, though not as speedy as the supercharged oxen at the head of Andsnes's cart. And, again, Lewis is less rapt than Osborne in 'Con mortuis in lingua mortua', the Scot truly otherworldly both in the degrees of pianissimo and the desolation of his stuttering close.

Kissin's 'Baba Yaga' skirts caricature in its violence, whereas Andsnes is very effective precisely because he saves some of his most explosive playing for this point. Lewis, on the other hand, manages to convey both power and an inexorable quality. In the 'Great Gate' both Lewis and Osborne take a spacious and grandiose approach, which works well enough at the outset: the problem arises about a minute and a half in, when the descending octaves arrive. All too easily this can sound somewhat laboured; Andsnes and Kissin both gain through faster tempi. In the end, choice is very much down to taste but personally I prefer my *Pictures* somewhat rawer.

The Schumann (perhaps a strange coupling) has much to recommend it. It is more contained than some; but Lewis's haloed sound and unfailing sense of thoughtfulness is winning, particularly in the opening movement. There is plenty of freedom and space to react but never at the expense of momentum (some may find Uchida too focused on Schumann's musings here). The second movement is less propulsive than some – Annie Fischer for instance, in whose hands the final stretto is wonderfully unbuttoned. But in the finale, whereas some look merely for beauty, Lewis finds a confiding tone that gives Schumann's phrases a speaking quality that is very touching. Harriet Smith Mussorgsky - selected comparisons:

Kissin (4/02) (RCA) 09026 63884-2 Andsnes (12/09) (EMI) 698360-2 Osborne (3/13) (HYPE) CDA67896 Schumann - selected comparisons: Uchida (12/10) (DECC) 478 2280DH2 or 478 2936DH A Fischer (WARN) 2564 63412-3

R & C Schumann

C Schumann Quatre Pièces caractéristiques, Op 5 - No 3, Romance; No 4, Le ballet des revenants R Schumann Piano Sonata No 1, Op 11; Humoreske, Op 20; Romanze, Op 28 No 2 Imogen Cooper pl Chandos (F) CHAN10841 (71' • DDD)



Robert and Clara Schumann join forces on this disc, and in one case their

emotional closeness triggers a possible musical connection as well. I cannot pretend that I was even aware of Clara's 'Le ballet des revenants' - one of four Pièces caractéristiques, Op 5, from 1833 before Imogen Cooper included it in her programme here but its opening figure is remarkably akin to a motif in the first movement's Allegro vivace section of Robert's F sharp minor Sonata, Op 11, on which he, too, was working in 1833. Both pieces go in their different directions, with Robert's piece conceived on a much broader canvas, but it is interesting to think that either Clara or Robert heard the other playing around with this idea and subconsciously adopted it. Or maybe it was deliberate. Who knows?

Nevertheless, it provides an intriguing link within a recital that starts with Robert's Humoreske, Op 20, and ends with the F sharp minor Sonata, with a 'Romanze' by Robert, a 'Romance' by Clara (also drawn from the Op 5 Pièces caractéristiques) and 'Le ballet des revenants'. Cooper has a thorough command of the Schumann language in the two major works buttressing her recital, the Humoreske finding that essential balance between overall cohesiveness and the contrast between the outgoing and inward-looking emotions that the individual sections of the piece express. The Sonata, too, with a beautifully floated 'Aria' of a second movement, combines intimacy with Romantic verve, judiciously differentiated, finely balanced and sustained by a compelling impulse.

Geoffrey Norris

Schumann

Carnaval, Op 9. Davidsbündlertänze, Op 6. Papillons, Op 2

Boris Giltburg pf

Naxos ® 8 573399 (77' • DDD)



This is Boris Giltburg's first disc since he signed to Naxos. His previous

recordings on Orchid, of barnstorming repertoire from Liszt to Prokofiev (A/12 and 10/13), have met with keen applause, so I was intrigued to hear what he'd do with Schumann.

Giltburg places Davidsbündlertänze first and right from the outset his playing has a malleable quality that emphasises the changeability of Schumann's moods. He's certainly not afraid to play up the differences between Schumann's two alter egos Florestan and Eusebius. Yet turn to Uchida in her recent recording and, in a movement such as No 12, directed Mit Humor, she conjures a more multidimensional character than does Giltburg, her playfulness given a slightly anarchic edge. In No 13, there's less contrast between the gruff energy of the outer energy and the velvety inner. Which brings me to another concern: the piano itself, which can acquire a certain edginess in its upper reaches.

Though there's plenty to impress, I'm not always convinced that Giltburg and Schumann are on the same emotional wavelength. In No 4 of *Papillons*, marked *Presto*, he is noticeably looser and slower than Hamelin, the Canadian imparting an elfish glee to the proceedings. You're too aware of Giltburg's point-making, which can sound contrived.

The opening of *Carnaval* is always a good test of approach. Giltburg is relatively steady (like Anda in 1955), lending a certain pomp to the proceedings. But there's a danger that at this speed the music can tend to drag. Uchida and Hamelin are both lighter on their feet here. And in numbers such as 'Pierrot' and the final March there's a tendency to be overemphatic. Others may well warm to this more than I have but I'm afraid this is something of a disappointment. Harriet Smith

Davidsbündlertänze – selected comparison:
Uchida (12/10) (DECC) 478 2280DH2 or 478 2936DH
Papillons, Carnaval – selected comparison:
Hamelin (1/06) (HYPE) CDA67120
Carnaval – selected comparisons:
Anda (10/55*) (TEST) SBT1069
Uchida (5/95*) (PHIL) 475 8260POR

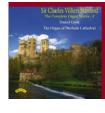
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'Jesu dulcis memoria'. Fantasia, 'Te Deum
laudamus', Op 116 No 1

Daniel Cook org

Priory © PRCD1106 (72' • DDD)

Played on the organ of Durham Cathedral



Three tips of the hat for this one: first to Cathedral Music for sponsoring the CD and making available again all of Stanford's organ music, much of it long out of print, a notable initiative for a small publisher; to the Willis-Harrison & Harrison organ of Durham Cathedral which, after its last rebuild, completed in 2001, is in fine form and strikes me as an ideal instrument on which to hear Stanford; and to Daniel Cook (now Sub-Organist of Westminster Abbey), who received his early music education on this very instrument and who inhabits Stanford's particular idiom with unshowy aplomb.

As to the music, it can veer from the inspired to the very ordinary (by which I mean the kind that is more rewarding for an organist to play than for an audience to hear). This second volume of Stanford's complete organ works has a mixture of both, beginning with the Fantasia and Fugue in D minor (from 1907), the only work here not based on a plainsong or hymn tune, and seldom heard – perhaps because, after the invigorating Fantasia, the workaday Fugue simply fizzles out without ceremony.

The Six Preludes and Postludes, Set 1 contains some attractive ideas (No 2 is a good recital piece) and some less so. One might say the same about the brief *In modo dorico*, the Prelude on *Jesu dulcis memoria* and the Fantasia on *Te Deum laudamus*. No qualms about the Sonata No 3 in D minor, Stanford at his magnificent best, with its central 'Benedictus' accommodating an unexpected martial section midway, and the sonata-rondo finale a resourceful treatment of the hymn tune 'Hanover' ('O worship the King, / All glorious above') in which Cook eventually unleashes the full power of the Durham organ. Jeremy Nicholas

Nadia Reisenberg

•

'110th Anniversary Tribute'

Kabalevsky Preludes, Op 38 Rachmaninov Morceaux de fantaisie, Op 3 - No 1, Elégie; No 2, Prelude; No 3, Mélodie; No 5, Sérénade. Polka de WR. Morceaux de salon, Op 10 - No 2, Waltz; No 3, Barcarolle; No 7, Mazurka **Tchaikovsky** Twelve Pieces, Op 40. Romance, Op 5. Two Pieces, Op 10. Souvenir de Hapasal, Op 2

Roméo © ② 7309/10 (158' • ADD) From Westminster originals, recorded June 1954 -

May 1955; previously issued on Ivory IVORY74002



Nadia Reisenberg pf

Originally on Ivory Classics, this glorious two-CD album is now lavishly reissued

to mark Nadia Reisenberg's 110th anniversary. A voice from another age,



Comprehensive overview: Raphaëlle Aellig Régnier follows Alexandre Tharaud on the road and in performance, as here with Les Violins du Roy (review on page 75)

Reisenberg (1905-82) makes it difficult to imagine a more unsullied, unimpeded musicianship backed by pianism of superfine quality. True to her Russian roots, she never invests Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov's miniatures with a weight beyond their often slender but in her hands entrancing worth. For Reisenberg her ultimate aim was for a distilled simplicity, never for 'originality' for its own sake. Again, and more assertively, she felt she had no right to 'meddle' with music.

Tchaikovsky may have taken a dim view of his solo piano works ('so many musical pancakes, quickly tossed and turned') but in Reisenberg's hands they emerge as so much more than salon charmers. The opening Etude makes for a dazzling curtain-raiser, the two Mazurkas provide piquant memories of Chopin, and who can resist the once popular 'Chant sans paroles' when given with such warmth and affection? In Rachmaninov, too, you hear a seamless Russian legato and beauty of sound, with the virtuoso intricacies of the Polka de WR tossed aside as child's play. In the first recording outside Russia of Kabalevsky's 24 Preludes there is again much to wonder at, even in music by a composer too often in search of his own voice. Still, No 1 reminds us that Kabalevsky was capable

of haunting beauty as well as facility, and Reisenberg's brilliance in the whirling *moto perpetuo* of No 10 is superb. But her warmth and ease are everywhere and it is heartening to know that there is more to come. Production is lavish and includes a moving tribute by Robert Sherman, Nadia Reisenberg's son. **Bryce Morrison**

'Dumka'

Balakirev Islamey, Op 18 **Glinka** L'alouette (transcr Balakirev) **Mussorgsky** Pictures at an Exhibition **Stravinsky** The Firebird (transcr Agosti) **Tchaikovsky** Dumka, Op 59 **Kotaro Fukuma** *pf* Editions Hortus (F) HORTUS115 (68' • DDD)



After a brilliant and refined recording success in Albéniz's *Iberia*, Kotaro Fukuma

moves to a more wintry clime. In his accompanying essay he writes touchingly of his time in Russia, where he imbibed sights, sounds and traditions that led inevitably to the present recording of Mussorgsky, Glinka-Balakirev, Balakirev, Tchaikovsky and Stravinsky-Agosti. An international prize-winner (though he confesses he is

glad that the competition arena is behind him), Fukuma again plays with unfailing expertise. He is hardly the sort of pianist to set jury members with fixed notions of interpretation at each other's throats; and if he occasionally steers a middle course, many will be grateful for his way of allowing his listeners their own space.

Fukuma's Mussorgsky is more musicianly than forced or inflated, and he is notably successful in the eerie world of 'Catacombae' and in the flickering halflights of 'Con mortuis in lingua mortua'. There is delicacy and precision in the very different, floridly pianistic world of Glinka-Balakirev and a coolly phrased manner in Islamey (for Liszt, 'an agreeable Oriental rattle', once known as the most difficult piece ever written for the piano). Tchaikovsky's Dumka is both elegant and commanding, while the Stravinsky-Agosti Firebird is thrown off with an enviable brilliance and finesse. The recording lacks the fullest range but does little to lessen the impact of so much impressive piano-playing. Bryce Morrison

'Echoes from an Empire'



Bartók Three Rondos on Slovak Folk Tunes, Sz84 **Berg** Piano Sonata, Op 1 **Enescu** Suite No 2, Op 10 **Janáček** Sonata 1.X.1905, 'From the Street'





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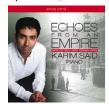
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Schoenberg Drei Klavierstücke, Op 11 Webern Sonata Movement Karim Said pf Opus Arte ® OACD9029D (72' • DDD)



In 'Echoes from an Empire' (good title), the Jordanian-born London-trained

pianist Karim Said (b1988) presents six engagingly diverse examples of piano works from the decade immediately before the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, beginning with the work that, perhaps better than any here, combines the past, present and future. Berg's Piano Sonata, Op 1 (1908-09) is given a fullblooded, lucid reading, both its texture and performance having much in common with Webern's Sonata Movement from three years earlier (in this, Said makes the most of the resonant bass register captured at Potton Hall). Schoenberg's Three Piano Pieces, Op 11 (1909) which end the disc, abandoning tonality almost entirely, have already taken us into a new world.

Elsewhere Said chooses to further illustrate his theme, somewhat surprisingly, with Bartók's *Three Rondos on Slovak Folk Tunes*, the innocent first of these dating from 1916, the latter two resolutely dissonant from a decade later. Janáček's *Sonata 1.X.1905*, a response to the death of a 20-year-old worker in a demonstration, is wonderfully well played, with Said creating a palpable mood of desolation in the spare *Adagio* second movement ('Death') before its impassioned climax.

The real discovery of the disc is Enescu's rarely heard Suite No 2 in D, his Op 10 written in 1903. In his excellent booklet, Paul Griffiths believes that the reason for all four movements being cast 'in olden style' was a strategy of the composer for defying the collapse of tonality. So we have the Baroque forms of a Toccata, Sarabande, Pavane and Bourrée, all of them 'touched with up-to-date exoticism'. Worth the price of this classily produced and superbly executed disc alone. Jeremy Nicholas

'The Malcolm Smith Memorial Album'

Handel L'Allegro – Come, but keep thy wonted state (transcr L Howard)^a **Holloway** Grand Heroical March^b **L Howard** Ruddigore: Fantaisie de concert, Op 40° **Matthew-Walker** Fantasy-Sonata: Hamlet (Piano Sonata No 3)^d **Searle** Piano Sonata, Op 21°

bd Mark Bebbington, abc Leslie Howard,

^eJulian Jacobson, ^bJohn Lill *pf* Naxos ® 8 571354 (55' • DDD)



Malcolm Smith (1932-2011) was head of the Promotion and Hire Library at Boosey &

Hawkes for many years and knew most of the leading composers of the post-war era. He was devoted to British music and left a bequest to make this recording possible. As with Smith himself – a charismatic eccentric – there is nothing quite like it.

Robin Holloway's stately six-hand *Grand Heroical March* was written for Smith's actual retirement in 1997 and is riddled with quotations from pieces he admired. Leslie Howard's admiration for Liszt is abundantly evident in the 99-CD set of the complete piano works. This is his own paraphrase of Sullivan's *Ruddigore* – whether you know the opera or not, the tunes are good.

Humphrey Searle was another devotee of Liszt, not the obvious enthusiasm for one of the first British 12-note composers. His Sonata was written for Liszt's 140th birthday in 1951 and premiered on that day by Gordon Watson, who made the first recording. Julian Jacobson puts this taxing but impressively rhetorical piece through its paces brilliantly – just the kind of gesture Smith would have admired, bringing something unknown to a wider audience. Then there is Robert Matthew-Walker's resourceful Fantasy-Sonata, premiered by Rhondda Gillespie in 1980 and dedicated to Hans Keller. This is closer to English traditions and Mark Bebbington's taut performance draws attention to a neglected and prolific composer - Smith would have liked that too. Everything well recorded.

Peter Dickinson

'Le temps dérobé'

A film by Raphaëlle Aellig Régnier Alexandre Tharaud of

Erato (F) 22 2564 62209-7

(93' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s) Bonus: Mozart's Piano Concerto No 23, K488, performed live by Tharaud with Les Violons du Roy under Bernard Labadie at the Salle Bourgie, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Montreal, February 13, 2013



This engrossing film illustrates what a richly fulfilling life that of the international concert pianist

DVD

can be – and also what a tough mental and physical grind it is. It follows Alexandre Tharaud in rehearsals for his various solo, chamber and orchestral dates on a schedule that takes him from Geneva, Paris, Zurich and Saint-Etienne to Kuala Lumpur, Ouebec and Montreal.

The film (its title is translated as 'Behind the Veil') is, to quote the DVD's blurb, 'a peek into the hidden life of the artist. That to which the public has no access.' A backstage view, if you like.

And it's an honest one, albeit with rather too much use of modish out-of-focus hand-held shots. Refreshingly, there is no narrator. Here are Tharaud's piano technicians making minute adjustments to tonight's instrument under his direction; here he is striving to get the effect that composer Gérard Pesson wants for a new piano concerto; next he's having a massage to relieve some muscular tension, then practising a passage of Ravel's G major Concerto in the dressing room, working on a tricky moment of ensemble with the cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras and discussing the exact sound he wants for his latest recording. The film is not concerned about the music he plays per se (neither the participants nor music titles are identified on screen). Rehearsal sequences or snatches of performance are cut off mid-phrase. We're on to the next location, the next engagement and the next challenge, sequences punctuated by Tharaud filmed in extreme close-up contemplating the nature of his art (all in French with excellent subtitles).

This is the other side of the coin – the solitary existence of a soloist. You have to like your own company for long stretches of time and endure with equanimity the horrors of today's international travel. Tomorrow is another lonely hotel room, an early flight the next morning, another day hanging about airports and another arrival in a strange city dragging your luggage behind you. And that's before you even think about making music, keeping your fingers in shape and your repertoire up to scratch. Of Tharaud's personal life we learn nothing; but as an illustration of what it takes to sustain a busy career in an overcrowded profession, this imaginatively shot and edited documentary should be played to all first-year music students. The bonus section of the DVD is a triumphant affirmation of Tharaud's talent and dedication to his art: a fine performance of Mozart's A major Concerto, K488, with the excellent Les Violons du Roy under Bernard Labadie. Jeremy Nicholas

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GRAMOPHONE Collector NEW MUSIC FOR ORGAN

Marc Rochester listens to four new discs on which living composers turn their craft towards the King of Instruments



Kevin Bowyer, 'just the man to root out music of which other organists fight shy'

here are they now? Forty years ago any organist worth their salt would have been able to name at least a dozen living composers producing fine music for the instrument which regularly found its way into recital programmes and on to CD. Today all but the most ardent seekersafter-the-new would be hard-pressed to name more than three or four. It seems the organ has fallen out of favour with contemporary composers. The fault may, of course, lie with the organists themselves who, always conservative, might be less willing than their 1970s counterparts to explore new ground. So we can only celebrate the four organists here (and their record labels) who have faith that, somewhere out there, worthwhile music is still being written for their instrument.

It will come as no surprise to find at the top of that list **Kevin Bowyer**, who has a mindset which does not so much embrace the new and unusual as go out and grab it by the scruff of the neck and drag it into the recital programme or CD tracklist. With an intellect that grapples into easy submission the most austere and forbidding musical edifices, and a technique that heroically tramples underfoot the kind of daunting textures which would send ordinary mortals into a blind panic, he is just the man to root out music of which other organists fight shy. Not that organists seem to be beating much of a path to Thierry Pallesco's door; his own website lists a mere 13 organists

who play his music. Clearly Pallesco writes music which requires considerable virtuosity as well as a keen intellectual grasp of its detail (despite the unattributed bookletnote in this Priory release devoted to his music, suggesting that 'Pallesco feels that it is better to keep music interesting and alive rather than stifling it with technical and intellectual constrictions'). Interesting and alive it most certainly is under the commanding ministrations of Kevin Bowyer, while the discreet but extensive charms of the 1996 Harrison organ of Glasgow Cathedral do much to enliven these fascinating pieces.

Robert Sirota's music gets rather more exposure, especially in academic institutions on the USA's eastern seaboard, but 'Celestial Wind' is a rare encounter with his organ music. Victoria Sirota has a uniquely good reason to devote her energies to it she is the composer's wife – and the two organs used (the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore and the Cathedral of St John the Divine, New York) do all that is asked of them in music which largely explores organ timbre. I remain unconvinced by the solo works - the Four Pieces in particular running over rather tired experimental ground – but am considerably taken with the Easter Canticles, in which the organ provides more of a backdrop to some richly imaginative writing for cello (compellingly delivered by Norman Fischer). Ironically, the longest work on the disc does not involve the organ at all. It is the ninemovement *Letters Abroad* for piano solo, performed by the composer himself.

On 'Capriccio', Margaret Phillips chooses a handful of works by composers now well into their fifties and beyond to demonstrate her not inconsiderable virtuosity and her innate handling of often quite demanding scores. It is thrilling to hear Sebastian Forbes's *Haec dies* and Lionel Rogg's *Hommage à Franz Liszt* delivered with such breathtaking panache in the somewhat intimate surroundings of Marlborough College Chapel; and, as a delightful moment of repose in all this aurally assertive music, the Dutch composer Ad Wammes presents charms aplenty in his minimalist *Miroir*.

Back in the 1970s organists active on the British recital scene were inundated with complimentary scores of new Scandinavian organ music from an eager publisher. And pretty good stuff a lot of it was too. One name which cropped up frequently was Egil Hovland, and it is a delight to come across him again in a programme of Norwegian music performed on organs in Filipstad, Sweden, and in Oslo by Harald Herresthal. Represented here by the brief and exhilarating Toccata on Nun danket, a colourful Chorale Partita and by a substantial three-movement suite, Il canto del mare, it is good to be reminded of a composer who stamped his own personality on every note he wrote. A powerful Suite d'orgue by Knut Nystedt and a charming set of variations by Conrad Baden provide fitting companions, while this compelling disc concludes with Arne Nordheim's exotic Response III. Here the organ is complemented by a battery of percussion and electronic effects, and while these extra resources might put this music out of the reach of many organists, there is surely enough here to reveal that there are still many fine composers for the instrument out there. 6

THE RECORDINGS



Pallesco Org Wks Bowyer

Priory © PRCD1086



R Sirota Celestial Wind V Sirota Albany (E) TROY1502



Various Cpsrs Capriccio **Phillips** Regent (F) REGCD419



Various Cpsrs Org Wks **Herresthal** Pro Musica (F) PPC9067

Brett Dean

Dean has emerged from the ranks of the Berlin Phil's viola section with a distinctive voice of his own, says Paul Griffiths

rifting through rainbows – or more often driven, by rhythmic energy – Brett Dean's music locks into one harmonic colour after another, generally with a rotating motif of just a few notes to keep the effect clear. Tonality here is expanded but anchored, brushing up to neighbours including Alban Berg and John Adams, and underpinning traditional kinds of expressive gesture and forward motion. The motif may be pushed to a point of explosion, or it may mutate, carrying the musical story on to a further page, another colour. Imagery, another realm of colour, is by no means foresworn. Indeed, this is often music with windows, whether into the past, the natural world or everyday life in the 21st century. Wherever it goes, though, and whatever it encounters, it remains bravely and boldly itself.

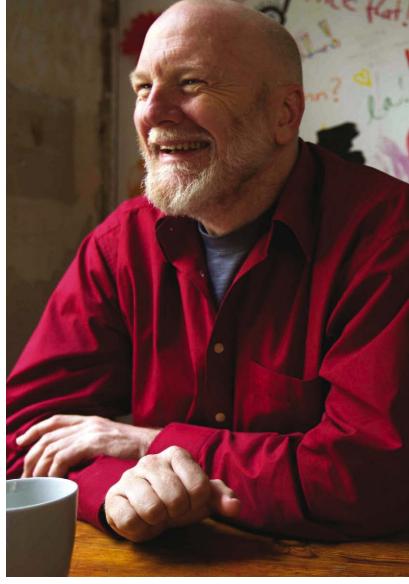
One might want to say that here is a composer who faced two hurdles, in coming from Australia and in being a viola player. As it worked out, though, the one helped the other. The viola brought Dean to Europe, where he was a member

'This is often music with windows, whether into the past, the natural world or everyday life in the 21st century'

of the Berlin Philharmonic for 14 years, and in Europe his creativity began to flourish, at first in the context of film work and improvisation. It was not until the late 1990s, when he was approaching 40, that he moved into full gear as a composer.

He soon made up for that late start. Though his breakthrough piece – *Ariel's Music*, a clarinet concerto – dates from only two decades ago, his output by now includes around 30 big scores, including five more concertos, symphonic compositions, cantatas and a full-length opera, as well as smaller choral settings, a good deal of chamber music, especially for strings, and a growing sequence of piano etudes. He has written for Sir Simon Rattle and Emanuel Ax, as well as repeatedly for older friends, notably Markus Stenz and Richard Tognetti. His abundant and seemingly still burgeoning productivity has not, however, been too well represented on record so far – though BIS has made a sound beginning.

Born in Brisbane, into a keenly musical family, Dean studied at the Queensland Conservatorium, from which he graduated in 1982. It was in 1984 that he went to Berlin to complete his studies with Wolfram Christ, then Principal Viola of the Berlin Philharmonic, which the following year he joined. He was therefore with the orchestra at the end of the Karajan era, and remained there through most of



Brett Dean: played in the Berlin Philharmonic under Karajan

Abbado's time, leaving when, in 1999, he needed more time for composition and also felt the need to return to Australia.

The composing had taken off in the wake of Ariel's Music (1995), which he wrote for his younger brother Paul to play and as a memorial to Ariel Glaser, a young girl who died of AIDS contracted through a blood transfusion received by her mother. In two movements that veer differently between elegy and protest, the work proved its composer's equal command of delicacy and force, and his direct expressive voice and sureness of style. However, he remained with the Berlin Philharmonic a few more years, writing pieces for colleagues, including Twelve Angry Men (1996) for the cello section, as well as a 70-minute score – featuring the cellist Pieter Wispelwey with electronic backing – for Jiří Kylián's ballet *One of a Kind* (1998). This was his first composition to be commercially recorded, followed by Ariel's Music and two other orchestral pieces on an ABC album.

Perhaps the work that did most for his early reputation, though, was a meditation on a searing harmonic slip from a Gesualdo madrigal, his *Carlo* (1997), for strings and sampler.



DEAN FACTS

Born 1961, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia Studied Queensland Conservatorium as a viola player (graduated 1982), then in Berlin; self-taught in composition

Career member of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra (1985-99); subsequently a freelance composer

Key moments first important performance - Ariel's Music, (Brisbane, 1995); Carlo for strings and sampler taken up by Rattle in Berlin and the Australian Chamber Orchestra on a national tour (1999); premiere of Viola Concerto (London, 2005); Grawemeyer Award for The Lost Art of Letter Writing (2009); premiere of opera Bliss (Sydney, 2010); beginning of three-year residency with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (2014) Publisher Boosey & Hawkes

The latter introduces voices singing from *Moro*, *lasso*, *al mio duolo* one of Gesualdo's most chromatic adventures, which the strings draw out and study. Communication goes both ways, for the voices come back more than once to participate in a dialogue that has shifted by now more to the modern composer's ground, a

dialogue that reaches its climax in a consonance arriving as a black sun, brilliant and alarming. Performed around the world from Tallinn to Kuala Lumpur, *Carlo* gave Dean his hit and surely helped convince him to leave his chair among the Berlin violas.

It was also his entry point for further conversations with the past, pursued in *Testament* for 12 violas (2002) – a gift to his former colleagues, quoting intermittently from Beethoven's First *Razumovsky* Quartet – and in his violin concerto *The Lost Art of Letter Writing* (2006), into whose first movement swerve junctures from Brahms. These two works are also connected in being based on 19th-century documents and in partly transcribing, as rapid, dry oscillations, the sound and action of handwriting. In *Testament*, Beethoven is writing his Heiligenstadt Testament – and raising his eyes toward ever clearer visions of the music to come, which eventually seems to be incorporated in his pen strokes. In the violin concerto, four epistolists are evoked, from Brahms to Ned Kelly by way of Van Gogh and Hugo Wolf, though the main character throughout is the luminous violin.

Despite all these references to older music and an older means of communication, Dean's music is strikingly non-

nostalgic, being too immediate for that. Even so, Dean is evidently exercised by the progressive hardening of language that has brought us telephone-queue assurances and corporate mission statements, to mention two exhibits presented, humorously and darkly, in his Vexations and Devotions for choirs, orchestra and electronics (2005). Support for the natural, the multifariously meaningful, is also voiced in his Pastoral Symphony (2000), which again uses sampled sounds, here to surround the instruments of a chamber orchestra with bird songs, and then, with a turn to speed and anxiety, bring on the sounds of tramping human feet and tree-felling. The same message, assisted by the same deft interweaving of performed and recorded sounds, is delivered by Water Music for saxophone quartet and chamber orchestra (2004), with movements of aqueous bubbling and coursing succeeded by a finale entitled 'Parched Earth'.

Hope for change that will conserve and enlarge, rather than destroy and limit, is conveyed by his Viola Concerto (2004), still without sentimentality, by means of an unusual but effective tripartite form in which the slow movement comes first and is short. This two-minute 'Fragment' has a repeating viola strain from which sparkling shivers of woodwind descend, but it is the four-note accompanying idea that will reappear, at calm moments in the two big movements that follow, and again at the end, where the viola meets its waiting companion, the cor anglais. This close makes the concerto also a love story – indeed, a love story twice over, as the whole piece speaks of its composer's warm dedication to his chosen instrument.

The concertos for viola and violin were followed by concentration on an opera, *Bliss*, after the novel by Peter Carey, which seems to have encouraged Dean to write more for voices. His most recent pieces include concertos and chamber music but also two cantatas, which he composed one after the other in 2012: *The Annunciation*, designed for Bach's church in Leipzig, and *The Last Days of Socrates*. Now he is working on another opera: *Hamlet*. **©**

DEAN ON DISC

Three of the best Brett Dean recordings from BIS

Water Music. Pa Dances. Carlo Bezaly f/ Raschèr S BIS (F) BIS1576 (11/0)

Water Music. Pastoral Symphony. The Siduri Dances. Carlo

Bezaly f/ Raschèr Sax Qt; Swedish CO / Gruber; Dean BIS (P) BIS1576 (11/09)

The classic *Carlo*, in which Dean confronts his music with Gesualdo's, is combined with two pieces where the dialogue partner is nature, and with a small-scale flute concerto.

Viola Concerto. Twelve Angry Men. Intimate Decisions. Komarov's Fall

Dean *va* **Sydney SO / Young; Wolff** BIS **(**®) BIS1696

Dean's concerto for viola is the gem, nicely offset by a controlled riot for cellos, a viola solo and an elegy of star sounds and distress calls for the first astronaut to die in space.

SCOTT Seeds Comment of the Comment o

The Lost Art of Letter Writing. Testament.
Vexations and Devotions

Zimmermann vn BBC Symphony Chorus; Gondwana
Voices; Sydney SO / Nott; Brabbins; Robertson
BIS ® BIS2016 (1/14)

Dean's violin concerto is coupled with his portrait of Beethoven and a fresco on modern language's limitations.

gramophone.co.uk GRAMOPHONE MARCH 2015 **79**

Vocal



Adrian Edwards reviews two discs of Hoddinott for voice:

'Spence's bright young tenor and crystal-clear diction ring out as clear as a bell' ▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 82



Richard Fairman on a recording that unveils Mompou's songs:

'There is no escaping the composer's inner flame of inspiration – that evanescent world of intimate emotions' ► REVIEW ON PAGE 83

JS Bach

Christmas Oratorio, BWV248

Sunhae Im sop Petra Noskaiová contr

Stephan Scherpe ten Jan Van der Crabben bass

La Petite Bande / Sigiswald Kuijken

Challenge Classics © © CC72394

(139' • DDD/DSD)



Sigiswald Kuijken's recent series of selected cantatas yielded many probing

readings, especially in the more intimate works. These are the contexts where La Petite Bande best harness their collective expressive potential and get behind the notes without the distraction of discomfort or imbalance – whether induced by the composer's demands or Kuijken's own fairly entrenched views on performance practice, delivery of text and so on.

This reading of the Christmas Oratorio exhibits many of Kuijken's most compelling qualities with his quietly authoritative, steady and organic understanding of how these six 'tableaux', unified and discrete in one, form a uniquely patient and kaleidoscopic Bachian festive narrative. As ever, the embedded timbral refinement of the instrumental palette makes its presence felt at every turn, the oboes touchingly effective in their bucolic overtones, the strings articulated with breathtaking élan (and, often, with deceptively wonderful textural doublings and juxtapositions with the wind, as in the opening of 'Und es waren Hirten') and the trumpets without 'modern' tuning holes making a quite eerily timeless impact in their effortless virtuosity, especially in the elegantly consorting framing choruses of Part 6.

To understand what underpins Kuijken's serious approach to Bach is to be reminded that his pioneering historical instincts are increasingly left to speak for themselves. The arias are often outstanding. Petra Noskaiová is always an arresting singer but she shouldn't be allowed to sing flat in her great slumber aria in Part 2. The highlights

include superb coloratura in 'Frohe Hirten' from Stephan Scherpe and Jan Van der Crabben's beautifully lucid account of 'Erleucht'.

Irrespective of historical evidence, the balance of one-to-a-part voices presents particular challenges, and it only takes one singer to be ill-equipped to wrongfoot the whole. Such is the case here, sadly, with a brittle soprano lacking the necessary capacity to blend (with either too much fast vibrato or none at all) and tune, the latter a problem further exacerbated by the struggle to negotiate the desirable roughage of the horns in 'Fallt mit danken'. For all the many fine attributes in this new reading, this is enough of a drawback to place it quite a distance below the frontrunners of Harnoncourt, Fasolis, Werner and, more recently, Stephen Layton.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Selected comparisons:
Werner (1/05^R) (ERAT) 2564 64735-1
Harnoncourt (12/07) (DHM) 88697 11225-2
Layton (11/13) (HYPE) CDA68031/2
Fasolis (ARTS) 47714-8

Brahms · Schumann

Brahms Der Schmied, Op 19 No 4. Wiegenlied, Op 49 No 4. Dein blaues Auge, Op 59 No 8. Meine Liebe ist grün, Op 63 No 5. Wir wandelten, wir zwei zusammen, Op 96 No 2. Wie Melodien zieht es mir, Op 105 No 1. Ständchen, Op 106 No 1 Schumann Lieder und Gesänge aus Goethes Wilhelm Meister, Op 98a. Gedichte der Königin Maria Stuart, Op 135. Familien-Gemälde, Op 34 No 4. So wahr die Sonne scheinet, Op 37 No 12. Ich denke dein, Op 78 No 3. Ich bin dein Baum, Op 101 No 3. Hoch, hoch sind die Berge, Op 138 No 8

Ann Murray mez Malcolm Martineau pf with John Mark Ainsley, Johnny Langridge tens Benjamin Appl bar



Schumann's final songs, settings of poems attributed to Mary, Queen of Scots, were long routinely dismissed as the products of a tired, sick mind. Yet in a fine performance, as here, their almost minimalistic starkness can be uncommonly moving. Several years after her retirement from the concert platform, Ann Murray sings with still-steady tone, sensitive phrasing and a quiet, concentrated intensity, flaring into passion in the central 'An die Königin Elisabeth' and culminating in a hypnotic, otherworldly 'Gebet' as Mary prays for deliverance. Here, and elsewhere, Murray has the art of increasing the tension without raising the volume.

Ideally, Mignon's four songs call for a purer, more youthful timbre than Murray's. But if she is stretched by the high-lying climaxes of 'Kennst du das Land', she touchingly embodies the mysterious girl's vulnerability and vaguely defined longings, using her mezzo depth to advantage in the declamatory, proto-Wagnerian 'Heiss mich nicht reden'. And given every encouragement by Malcolm Martineau's deft pianism, she brings a coquettish charm, without winsomeness, to the song of the flighty actress Philine, first cousin to Strauss's Zerbinetta.

Interleaved with the Mignon songs are those of the blind old Harper, Mignon's father (though neither one knows it), sung with unsentimental gravitas by the impressive young baritone Benjamin Appl. With clear, incisive diction, he characterises vividly in the narrative 'Ballade des Harfners' and catches both the Lear-like weariness of soul and the accusatory bitterness of 'Wer sich der Einsamkeit ergibt'. In a clutch of duets -Schumann at his most beguilingly gemütlich - Murray combines agreeably with Appl, John Mark Ainsley and her son Johnny Langridge, an apt choice for the mellifluous 'Familien-Gemälde' ('Family Portrait'). On her own she rounds off this thoughtfully planned recital with a group of popular Brahms songs, sung with subtle understanding and an unerring feeling for Brahmsian rubato. If Murray sounds a touch raw in the unbridled 'Meine Liebe ist grün', there is rich compensation in a

deeply felt, broadly phrased performance of 'Wie Melodien', or a delicately timed and inflected 'Ständchen', where, characteristically, Martineau's point and wit contribute much to the song's success.

Richard Wigmore

Britten · Schubert

Britten Sechs Hölderlin-Fragmente, Op 61. Oft in the stilly night. The Minstrel Boy. At the mid hour of night. Rich and rare. The last rose of summer **Schubert** O Quell, was strömst du rasch und wild, D874. Im Frühling, D882. Im Freien, D880. Der Wanderer an den Mond, D870. Ständchen, D889. An Silvia, D891. Trinklied, D888

Robin Tritschler ten lain Burnside pf
Wigmore Hall Live (WHLIVEOO71 (47' • DDD)
Recorded live, January 11, 2014



This year marks the 10th anniversary of Wigmore Hall Live and the label has

plenty to celebrate. Its latest disc, from tenor Robin Tritschler and pianist Iain Burnside, shows just what and why.

The recording quality is superb – vivid and immediate, with all the Wigmore Hall's distinctive intimacy. Burnside's piano accompaniments glow with colour, a natural foil to the narrower, precise palette of Tritschler, a BBC New Generation Artist 2012-14.

A classic pairing of Britten and Schubert is less a portrait than a snapshot of two artists at contrasting moments in their careers; Schubert's 1826 (penurious, productive) is set against Britten's 1958 (successful, modest output), offering Tritschler the opportunity to perform some of the earlier composer's best-known songs and some of the latter's least. Britten's Hölderlin Fragments are the opener, a natural fit for this young Irish tenor's carefully calibrated expression. There are no dynamic or emotional extremes here but Tritschler and Burnside discover drama in the details - the delicate thread of the vocal legato leading the piano's groping arpeggios through the cycle's darkest psychological passages.

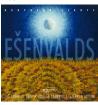
Tritschler's delivery is never overworked, his enunciation clear but always natural, unforced. It's an approach that gives his Schubert Lieder an attractive folksimplicity while in Britten's folksong arrangements it ensures that things don't get too precious or affected. On the strength of this disc and his recent Signum release of songs from the Great War, Tritschler is a serious new fixture of art-

song. Whether he has the power and expressive range for the opera house remains to be seen but on the strength of this I'd be very curious to hear a Peter Quint, a Tamino, a Male Chorus.

Alexandra Coghlan **Ešenvalds**

Amazing Grace. The Earthly Rose^a. The Heavens' Flock. Merton College Service. The New Moon. Northern Lights. O Emmanuel. Only in sleep. O salutaris hostia. Psalm 67. Rivers of Light. Stars. Trinity Te Deum^b. Ubi caritas. Who can sail without the wind^a

The Choir of Trinity College Cambridge /
Stephen Layton with ^{ab}Sally Pryce hp ^bTrinity Brass
Hyperion © CDA68083 (68' • DDD • T/t)



Born in 1977, Latvian Ēriks Ešenvalds is principally known as a composer of choral

music. This album commemorates a twoyear stint as Fellow Commoner at Trinity College, Cambridge, whose choir is here joined by Trinity Brass and harpist Sally Pryce. Ešenvalds's style is resolutely tonal, at times harking to the Anglican tradition (in the Trinity Te Deum and the Merton College Service), and at others to a more ethereal form of post-minimalism, though without the processual apparatus that sometimes pertains in the latter style. It is, in other words, particularly well suited for mixed modern choirs, whether or not accompanied by brass, organ or (in Ešenvalds's more playful mood) Jew's harp or tuned glasses. Within this stylistic range it is also varied in its range and moods, with the texts the determining factor (as the title suggests, not all of these are sacred).

Trinity College's choir sounds as though its members relish the experience of recording his music. The sonority is secure from top to bottom (one is used to fine female trebles, but basses of this depth and solidity are rarer in such choirs), and the recording has clarity, detail and presence. For myself, I find Ešenvalds at his most convincing when dwelling on natural phenomena of his homeland; too often, the sacred music flirts with bombast (Te Deum), predictable harmonic progressions (Magnificat) or clichéd spirituality (O salutaris hostia). Nevertheless, lovers of this corner of the choral repertoire will find here much to enjoy. Fabrice Fitch

Handel

Israel in Egypt, HWV54

Julia Doyle, Maria Valdmaa sops David Allsopp counterten James Gilchrist ten Roderick Williams,

Peter Harvey basses Netherlands Chamber Choir; Le Concert Lorrain / Roy Goodman Etcetera (*) ② KTC1517 (112' • DDD) Recorded live



Handel's first version of *Israel in Egypt* (1739) included a makeshift first part

parodied from the anthem *The ways of Zion do mourn*, composed for the funeral of Queen Caroline in 1737. Andrew Parrott's trailblazing premiere recording of Handel's original version remains the high benchmark but one of the best alternatives is Roy Goodman's Brandenburg Consort accompanying the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, conducted by Stephen Cleobury. Now at the helm of the ship, Goodman's live recording was made by Radio Bremen without any post-concert patching.

The pacing and articulation of the excellent band Le Concert Lorrain are consistently insightful and sympathetic, and the accomplished Netherlands Chamber Choir offer plenty of merits. The counterpoint is shaped exquisitely in 'The sons of Israel do mourn', with judicious balance between plaintive oboes and strings. The exclamatory refrains 'How is the mighty fall'n' are reiterated with ideally realised dissonances, rhythmical poise and dramatic power. The harmonic sense of the choral lines and orchestral balance are never obscured in Handel's vivid description of the plague of flies, lice and locusts; the trombones, woodwind, drums and strings achieve amazing textural clarity in the antiphonal exchanges of hailstones. Goodman's astute shaping of the fugal material in 'He smote all the first-born of Egypt' transcends the merely formulaic choppiness one sometimes encounters. The full range of choral moods and colours emerges successfully, whether it is the requisite solemn gravity, graceful pastoral charm, turbulent storminess, tautly ominous, or dashing splendour in the bold finale to Part 3's Song of Moses.

There isn't much for the soloists to do until Part 3 but it is no mean feat that Roderick Williams and Peter Harvey make 'The Lord is a man of war' into a conversational statement devoid of bluster. Anachronistic guitar strumming is intrusive in 'The enemy said I will pursue' but James Gilchrist's singing brims with dramatic vigour. David Vickers

Selected comparisons:
Parrott (2/91^R) (VIRG) 562155-2
Cleobury (10/00) (DECC) 452 295-2DH2

Handel

'Music for Queen Caroline' The King shall rejoice, HWV260. Te Deum, HWV280. The ways of Zion do mourn, HWV264

Tim Mead counterten Sean Clayton ten

Lisandro Abadie bass-bar

Les Arts Florissants / William Christie Les Arts Florissants Editions © AF004 (72' • DDD • T)



The most amiable of Britain's early Hanoverian monarchs seems to have been

Caroline of Ansbach (1683-1737), wife (and cousin) of George II; she was on friendly terms with Newton, Leibniz, Voltaire and Pope, and was an avid patron of the arts and supporter of Handel. The anthem Mybeart is inditing was sung when she was crowned at Westminster Abbey in 1727 but William Christie ignores that and instead launches 'Music for Queen Caroline' with The King shall rejoice (which, of course, is all about George II). The so-called 'Caroline' Te Deum is the shortest and most intimately scaled of Handel's five settings of the canticle. Performed in church services welcoming the newly arrived Hanoverian royal family to St James's Palace in 1714, it has scant connection to Caroline (then the Princess of Wales), but you can't keep a good nickname down. Soloists Tim Mead, Sean Clayton and Lisandro Abadie contribute to a solid alternative to The King's Consort's polished reading (Hyperion, 12/89), although Christie's big coronation-size choir dwarfs music designed for the intimacy of the Chapel Royal.

Queen Caroline's funeral service at Westminster Abbey in 1737 featured the full anthem The ways of Zion do mourn. Containing a marvellous variety of affects and styles within a coherent expression of nuanced mourning, I reckon it is Handel's greatest achievement as a composer of English church music. Christie's liberty of adding drums rolls to the plangent string introduction is a bridge too far for my taste, but otherwise sublime slow music is sonorously satisfying and builds with emotional conviction. Gently lilting strings and the full choir's blossoming sonorities underline the eloquence of Handel's nostalgic memories of Caroline's virtues in 'When the ear heard her'. Christie's jolting abrasiveness for 'How are the mighty fall'n' is a rare misstep into unpersuasive exaggeration, and the sudden retraction to inauthentic (albeit lovely) solo voices in 'She deliver'd the poor that cried' is an

artificial contrivance that calls attention to its own unlikelihood. Christie's handling of the archaic quick sections in 'Their bodies are buried in peace' is surprisingly ploddy but his judgement of the melancholic coda for strings that concludes the anthem bleakly on a bare octave (ie without harmony) is profoundly beautiful. With such a paltry discography, this performance will do nicely until the piece gets the broader recognition it deserves. David Vickers

Hoddinott

(3)

'Landscapes: Song-Cycles and Folk Songs' Landscapes (Ynys Môn), Op 87^a. Two Songs from Glamorgan^a. The Silver Hound, Op 121^a. One must always have love, Op 152 No 3^b. Towy Landscape, Op 190^c. Six Welsh Folksongs^a bcClaire Booth sop ^aNicky Spence ten

^cJeremy Huw Williams *bar*

abcAndrew Matthews-Owen, Michael Pollock pf Naxos ® 8 571360 (60' • DDD • T) From British Music Society BMS437CD (12/10)

Hoddinott

'Grongar Hill'

Grongar Hill, Op 168. A Joyful Song, Op 2. Lullaby, Op 4 No 1. Blake Songs, Op 192. Medieval Carol, Op 38 No 2. Four Welsh Songs (Pedair Cân Gymreig). May's Paradise (Paradwys Mai), Op 143 No 1

Jeremy Huw Williams Dar Nigel Foster pf Welsh Chamber Orchestra Ensemble / Anthony Hose Metronome (F) METCD1088 (46' • DDD)





Alun Hoddinott's prolific output hasn't fared well on disc in recent years so it's good to welcome these two CDs of his song-cycles and folksongs to make up for that neglect. Although there's no duplication of repertoire, the baritone Jeremy Huw Williams features on both of them, as do stanzas from *Grongar Hill* by John Dyer and, on the CD booklets, artwork by John Piper, who knew the landscape of Carmarthenshire well.

The Naxos CD makes a good introduction to Hoddinott's songs. Nicky Spence sings the *Six Welsh Folksongs* in English translations by the composer's wife and he is ideally cast in these settings to some familiar tunes. 'The Golden Wheat' is certainly a rival to the Irish 'The Lark in the Clear Air' for beauty of line. Hoddinott's accompaniments never mask the vocal line, so that Spence's bright young tenor and crystal-clear diction ring out as clear as a bell. *Landscapes*, Emyr

Humphreys's stimulating meditations on locations in Anglesey, are compellingly projected. The Two Songs from Glamorgan are very fetching too, the second, a recruiting song, with a fa-la-la refrain is a natural encore. The Silver Hound, with texts by Ursula Vaughan Williams on the theme of evanescence, is almost a mini-cantata charting man's seven ages with Prologue and Epilogue. It's a challenging sing that Spence meets full-on. 'Towy Landscape' is part of the Grongar Hill cycle for soprano and baritone, with Claire Booth and Williams giving committed performances. Like Booth's solo 'One must always have love', Grongar Hill brooks no favours of the listener or the singers, who sing expressively in face of the vocal difficulties.

Sincerity is the hallmark of Williams's CD. 'Grongar Hill', which like *Paradwys Mai* is accompanied by strings and piano, would, I felt, have benefited from being recorded further from the microphone. There's some lovely *legato* singing from Williams – witness 'Ah! Sun-flower' from the *Blake Songs*. At other times there's an uneveness of line, and sometimes one can't help thinking of the unique sound of Peter Pears. The *Four Welsh Songs* were an immediate hit with audiences at the 1964 Eisteddfod. Williams tosses them off admirably, with Nigel Foster as his accomplished pianist. **Adrian Edwards**

Machaut



'The Dart of Love'

Le Grant (attrib) Se je chant mains que ne suelh. Machaut Ay mi, dame de valour. Dame, je sui cils/Fins cuers dous/Fins cuers dous. Helas, tant ay doleur et peinne. Il m'est avis qu'il n'est dons de nature. Lasse! comment oublieray/Se j'aim mon loial amy/Pour quoy me bat mes maris?. Phyton, le mervilleus serpent. Pour ce que tous mes chans fais. Quant en moy/Amour et biauté parfaite/Amara valde. Rose, lis, printemps, verdure. S'Amours ne fait par sa grace adoucir. Sans cuer, m'en vois/Amis dolens/Dame, par vous. Se vous n'estes pour mon guerredon nee The Orlando Consort

Hyperion (F) CDA68008 (65' • DDD • T/t)



This second Machaut recording by The Orlando Consort for Hyperion seems to me

a return to their best form. Much of the time the musical and textual argument puts the spotlight on the consort's younger members, the countertenor Matthew Venner and the higher tenor Mark Dobel (the lower parts being sung but not texted). Their agility and Venner's clear, well-



Something new to say: The Orlando Consort record music by Guillaume de Machaut at the church of St John the Baptist, Loughton, Essex

modulated timbre and admirable control of phrasing play no small part in The Orlandos' rejuvenation: they appear to good effect in the consecutive tracks *Quant en moy* and *S'Amours ne fait*. The texts, which in Machaut's case are particularly worth absorbing, are also more intelligible here than has sometimes been the case.

The programme is nicely varied in mood and scoring, ranging from four-voice ballades and motets to a single-voice virelai, and every combination in between. It also includes a higher proportion of pieces already present in the discography than the previous instalment (11/13), and in these pieces The Orlandos either find something new to say or say it particularly well (try Rose, lis, for example, or the melancholy Dame, je suis cils, which Gothic Voices had made their own, recording it not once but twice). Of those pieces new to the discography I'd single out the humorous hunter's canon Se je chant mains by Machaut's contemporary, Denis Le Grant, whose calls and barks are nicely suggested without the music descending into slapstick. A thoughtful essay by Anne Stone makes audible sense of the many connections between the pieces on this valuable, impressive recording.

Fabrice Fitch

Mompou

Combat del somni. Cançó de la fira. Pastoral. Trois comptines - 1926; 1943. Bécquerinas. Cantar del alma. Aureana do Sil'. El niño mudo. Le nuage. Primeros pasos. Neu **Roger Padullés** *ten* **lain Burnside** *pf* Opus Arte (© OACD9021D (61' • DDD)



Thanks to Stephen Hough and Arcadi Volodos, Mompou's piano music has had

its moments of glory in the Gramophone Awards. His songs have not been as lucky, so this thoughtfully crafted all-Mompou recital featuring a young Catalan tenor has the double virtue of introducing a promising young singer in little-known music. The programme includes three collections - Combat del somni, the two sets of Comptines, composed 12 years apart, and the Becquerinas - with eight other songs. There is more variety than might have been expected, as Mompou's songs explore religious ecstasy and amorous despair, childhood games and Spanish dances, and yet there is no escaping the composer's inner flame of inspiration – that evanescent world of intimate emotions

always just out of reach, drawing the inquisitive listener on.

Roger Padullés's warm, youthful tenor makes an attractive guide to this intriguing repertoire. His style is well-schooled rather than inspiring but he captures the gently hypnotic 'Damunt de tu només les flors' nicely (some may recall Victoria de los Angeles's elegant performance). The wideeved simplicity of the six Comptines, based on childhood songs and dances, comes across with unaffected naturalness. The six Bécquer songs, composed when Mompou was 87, venture into more red-blooded territory, especially the impassioned 'Olas gigantes' with its thunderous waves and storm clouds rent by lightning, vividly brought to life by Iain Burnside. Do not expect memorable tunes or gripping narratives. Mompou's art is that of the Impressionist, a composer of half-lights and reflected images. Richard Fairman

Pärt



'Tintinnabuli'

Seven Magnificat Antiphons. Magnificat. Which was the son of.... Nunc dimittis. The Woman with the Alabaster Box. Tribute to Caesar. I am the true vine. Triodion

The Tallis Scholars / Peter Phillips
Gimell © CDGIMO49 (67' • DDD • T/t)



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Given that the music of Arvo Pärt is among a vanishingly small group by whom it is

possible to follow a clear line back to 'early' music, The Tallis Scholars are, on paper, the best group imaginable to record his music. Peter Phillips has disagreed in the past with the idea that there is a direct link between the two – it is certainly the case that the stasis that underpins Pärt's harmony creates a kind of timelessness that is less, not more, in need of historical context - but either way, the purity of The Tallis Scholars' sound provides the perfect scaffolding for the pieces on this disc. Not least because the bell-like, note-clustering Tintinnabuli music of Pärt (illustrated here in its most basic form in the Magnificat) is there specifically to address the issue of perception, time and history.

The argument about whether Pärt is a composer affected by context or simply creating music out of a vacuum continues, but in many ways its calm equilibrium is an engaging mystery that could only be considered regressive if viewed in its dimmest light. And in their performance (immaculate as always, apart from a very few issues – largely at the top of the texture – with vowel sounds and clarity of words), The Tallis Scholars have presented their chosen repertoire in the way they have always done best – as a sound world of profound beauty. Caroline Gill

Schubert

Winterreise, D911

Jan Van Elsacker ten Tom Beghin fp

Evil Penguin (E) EPRC016 (70' • DDD)

Schubert

Winterreise, D911^a. Die schöne Müllerin, D795^b. Schwanengesang, D957^c. Die Taubenpost, D965a^c. Sehnsucht, D879^c. Der Tod und das Mädchen, D531^c. Auf der Bruck, D853^c. Fischerweise, D881^c. Der Wanderer, D493^c Nathalie Stutzmann contr Inger Södergren pf Erato (§) (3) 2564 62370-1 (3h 31' • DDD) From Calliope ^aCAL9339 (10/04), ^bCAL9379, ^cCAL9359 (4/06)





In a note accompanying this new Winterreise with Jan Van Elsacker, the fortepianist and musicologist Tom Beghin

asks what yet another new recording of Schubert's great song-cycle might offer. The answer, in the first instance, is the instrument Beghin plays, a newly restored Gottlieb Hafner from Vienna *c*1830, whose five pedals – and attendant effects – Beghin is unafraid to employ.

I winced at the sound of the tinkly bell he adds to 'Die Post' but the occasional use of the buzzy 'bassoon' pedal and dull thud of a drum elsewhere seems more acceptable. Beghin is also able to adjust the timbre of the instrument's brittle sound. The effect in 'Der Leiermann' is properly haunting but any benefit in 'Auf dem Flusse' is undone by strange interpretative choices: a tempo that feels too fast and the decision to play the left hand's dotted lines with a swing rhythm. Other tempi also feel ill-judged (that for 'Gute Nacht' is also too fast, for starters), and I can do without the jerky rubato, or the twiddles and turns Beghin sprinkles around.

Another problem, though, is Van Elsacker himself, a Baroque specialist whose light, soft tenor is employed with a strange reticence. He paws timidly at the vocal line, employing a great deal of head voice, and has a strangely didactic and emphatic way of communicating Müller's German. There might be musicological justifications for this 'declamatory' (Beghin's word) performance style but it feels drily academic, unnatural and, for the most part, uninvolving.

Nathalie Stutzmann's 2003 recording with Inger Södergren (originally on Calliope but now reissued with the other cycles by Warner) in many ways serves as an antidote: classily sung in the French contralto's wonderfully rich and androgynous voice, interpretatively serene and smooth. There are many beauties on the way; and whenever Stutzmann is required to spin a hushed line, the result is hypnotic ('Die liebe Farbe' in Die schöne Müllerin is a case in point). But elsewhere throughout all three discs, the characterisation is generalised, with Stutzmann giving the impression of a stately vessel sailing unruffled through these emotional waters. More naturalsounding, perhaps, but not in the end a great deal more involving.

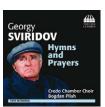
Hugo Shirley

Sviridov

Hymns and Prayers

Ivanna Bondaruk sop Yuliya Zuveya mez

Roman Podlubnyak, Roman Pachashynsky tens Nazar Yakobenchuk bar Tarasiy Mudrak bass Credo Chamber Choir / Bogdan Plish Toccata Classics (© TOCC0123 (79' • DDD)



Sviridov's work has slowly been making its presence felt in the West. Choral works

turn up in anthologies with some regularity now, and his song-cycle Russia Cast Adrift has been recorded, unforgettably, by Dmitri Hvorostovsky (Philips, 8/96 – nla). Toccata has done the world a great service in recording the composer's tremendous cycle Hymns and Prayers, compiled over the course of many years and finished only shortly before his death in 1998. It is not, as Stuart Campbell's excellent bookletnotes point out, a cycle intended for liturgical performance; Sviridov takes liberties with the texts, cutting here, adding or changing a word there. Even more importantly, the music is simply not consistently liturgical in ambience. Even though the composer may have seen himself, quite justifiably, in the line of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov, something very audible in his work, his approach to text-setting is personal and dramatic.

The 'Song of Purification' provides a perfect example of Sviridov's approach. It creates a yearning, penitential atmosphere with its arching melodic lines, and sets verses taken from various places in Psalm 50 and the invocation 'Most Holy Mother of God, save me. Alleluia', so could qualify as para-liturgical. Sviridov is not only a master of dramatic pacing and narrative but of choral texture, and this is something he certainly absorbed from the great sacred choral tradition that culminated in Rachmaninov's *Vigil*.

The performances by the Credo Chamber Choir, founded in 2002 and directed by Bogdan Plish, are outstanding. The singers miss no shade, no colour, no subtlety in Sviridov's work, and in the Uspensky Cathedral of the Kiev Pechersk Lavra they have the perfect recording venue. Highly recommended. Ivan Moody

'Father & Son'

Anonymous Weisst du, wieviel Sternlein stehen Brahms Deutsche Volkslieder, WoO33 - No 2, Erlaube mir, fein's Mädchen; No 5, Die Sonne scheint nicht mehr; No 6, Da unten im Tale; No 42, In stiller Nacht Bresgen O du stille Zeit Schubert Vier Gesänge, D983 - No 2, Zum Rundetanz; No 3, Die Nacht. Auf dem Wasser zu singen, D774. Des Fischers Liebesgluck, D933. Erlkönig, D328. Im Abendrot, D799. Licht und Liebe, D352. Meeres Stille, D216. Nacht und Träume, D827. Wandrers Nachtlied II, 'Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh', D768. Widerspruch, D865. Der Zwerg, D771 Schumann Nachtlied, Op 96 No 1



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Silcher Ännchen von Tharau. Frisch gesungen. Loreley. O wie herbe ist das Scheiden **Zilcher** Five Duets, Op 109

Christoph Prégardien, Julian Prégardien *tens* **Michael Gees** *pf* with **Fabienne Waga,**

Patricia Messner harms

Challenge Classics © © CC72645 (74' • DDD/DSD)



Prégardien *père* and *fils* have been performing together for several years and this disc

of duets – some original, most in arrangements – is often delightful. Both tenors display family traits of appealing mellifluousness and impeccable musicality. Together they communicate a sense of something homely, of improvisation and of singing for pure enjoyment.

Perhaps inevitably, though, it's the folksier numbers that come off better. Quoted in the slightly rambling bookletnote, Christoph Prégardien mentions how even he had doubts at first regarding the wisdom of arranging Schubert for two voices (although 'Licht und Liebe' was originally a tenor-soprano duet and 'Widerspruch' was also composed in a version for vocal ensemble). In the event, the more reflective songs are more successful than the ballads. I found myself giving in to the luscious additions to 'Nacht und Träume' and 'Wandrers Nachtlied' (and the version of Schumann's setting of the same poem). 'Erlkönig' and 'Der Zwerg' lose narrative intensity, though, while the additions and voice-swapping can feel fussy - 'Auf dem Wasser zu singen' ends up sounding earthbound.

The opening four folksy songs by Friedrich Silcher are more straightforwardly enjoyable, as are Hermann Zilcher's versions of four Brahms *Volkslieder*. Zilcher's own duets, performed with swagger and sensitivity by turns, are more eccentric, their use of two sparingly employed harmonicas adding a strange hint of Bob Dylan. The final two numbers – a dreamy folksong and Cesar Bresgen's 'O du stille Zeit' – prove irresistible. Michael Gees, himself responsible for some of the arrangements, contributes excellent accompaniment throughout. Hugo Shirley

'Polyphonies oubliées'

Anonymous Ave consurgens aurora. Lumen ad revelationem & Nunc dimittis. Credo in unum Deum. Mater regis angelorum. Nunc dimittis/ Ayn apolis/Magnum nomen Domini. Litaniae B Mariae Virginis. Miserere. Creator omnium. Laudate pueri. In exitu Israel. Laudate Dominum

du 3º ton. Pange lingua. Dixit Dominus. Ave maris stella. Alleluia, O filli et filiae. Ave maris stella. Kyrie de la Messe des morts. Dies irae. Omne quod dat mihi & Magnificat du 7º ton. Ave verum corpus. Ut queant laxis. Inviolata **Bournonville** Ave regina coelorum **Charpentier** De profundis **Kunc** Adoremus in aeternum **Perne** Kyrie de la Messe des solennels mineurs **Sermisy** Magnificat du 6º ton

Ensemble Gilles Binchois; Maîtrise de Toulouse / Dominique Vellard

Aparté (F) (2) APO97 (132' • DDD)



Fauxbourdon is often seen as polyphony's poor relation, suitable only for

congregational Mass settings or choirs with too little rehearsal time. Frequently lacking the authority of authorship, these chant harmonisations have struggled to gain status. The booklet-notes for 'Polyphonies oubliées' go even further, claiming that fauxbourdons 'cannot be regarded as musical works as such' but rather 'a collective means of expressing plainchant'. So why bother to record two discs of them?

Fauxbourdon represents perhaps the single longest continuous musical tradition in church music, one extending from the medieval period to the 21st century. Despite this, it is also the least recorded and studied genre. Enter FABRICA, a research project involving the Ensemble Gilles Binchois and academics from the universities of Toulouse. Over four years they rediscovered a lost repertoire in both research and performance, and this recording reflects the results in all their diversity, from the earliest improvised note-for-note harmonisations of the 16th century to the sophisticated fauxbourdon psalms and Magnificats of Charpentier and Sermisy.

In many ways fauxbourdon is a blank canvas, an invitation to each age to paint plainchant melodies with their own colours. By programming these two discs chronologically, the musicians offer listeners the opportunity to trace a gradual and evolving classical style, always with a melodic touchstone at their core.

Under director Dominique Vellard, the Ensemble Gilles Binchois prove their flexibility, stepping outside their usual sound world for the thick harmonies of the 19th century. Intonation, expression and ensemble remain an impeccable constant, and character and variety are aided by the contributions of the children's choir Maîtrise de Toulouse. Would you listen to these discs straight through? Possibly not;

but as a resource, an education, they are invaluable. Alexandra Coghlan

'Portraits'

Schubert Vier Gesänge aus 'Wilhelm Meister', D877 - No 2, Heiss mich nicht reden; No 3, So lasst mich scheinen; No 4, Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt. Mignon, D321. Der König in Thule, D367. Gretchen am Spinnrade, D118. Gretchens Bitte, D564 Schumann Gedichte der Königin Maria Stuart, Op 135 R Strauss Die Nacht, Op 10 No 3. Morgen, Op 27 No 4. Schlechtes Wetter, Op 69 No 5. Befreit, Op 39 No 4 Wolf Goethe-Lieder - Mignon I-III; Mignon: Kennst du das Land

Dorothea Röschmann sop **Malcolm Martineau** pf Sony Classical F 88883 78585-2 (66' • DDD • T/t)



Here is a portrait gallery of women in 19th-century German song, comprising two

collections depicting Mignon (by Schubert and Wolf) and one each devoted to Gretchen and Mary Stuart. The choices may seem to go against the grain, as Dorothea Röschmann does not sound naturally cast as either of Goethe's young characters. Her soprano has taken on a darker sound of late, which she compounds with a tendency to accentuate guttural consonants - a rather self-conscious mannerism, which takes her further from an easily flowing, lyrical style. It is worth persevering, though, because Röschmann is highly skilled in Lieder and her partnership with Malcolm Martineau has delivered a recital that gets beneath the music's skin.

In four of Schubert's Mignon settings she sings with the intensity of utterance that defines her as a Lieder interpreter. As Gretchen, she sounds improbably imperious as she recounts the story of 'Der König in Thule', though she makes the listener hang on every word. 'Gretchens Bitte', D564, is sung in the completed version by Britten, as it is in Hyperion's Schubert Edition. Röschmann's more mature accents suit Schumann's five short Mary Stuart songs well. There is an interlude for four popular songs by Strauss (how do these fit the 'Portraits' theme?) where the lack of Straussian bloom to the voice is compensated by much highpressure emotion. 'Befreit', sensitively accompanied by Martineau, is properly moving. Then she returns to Mignon in Wolf's four settings, recalling Elisabeth Schwarzkopf in the intensity she brings to songs. This disc will not appeal to everybody but it is a recital to which I shall return. Richard Fairman

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REISSUES

Rob Cowan on two Jean Martinon boxes; **Peter Quantrill** appraises Marie-Claire Alain's epic, 22-disc organ survey

Two French greats



Jean Martinon: Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1963 to 1969

ynamic, elegant, mindful of detail and a good orchestral trainer, Lyons-born Jean Martinon (1910-76) was a rostrum natural, a notable member of a gifted generation of conductors whose recordings warrant permanent availability. Perhaps the most varied Martinon CD set released up to now is the nine-disc 'The Complete Decca Recordings 1951-1960' which, as well as his EMI Debussy-Ravel legacy, is already well known to local collectors.

Now a 10-disc RCA Red Seal box gathers together his Complete Chicago Symphony Orchestra recordings (Martinon was Music Director of the orchestra from 1963 to 1969). Some of these performances have appeared as single releases: Varèse's Arcana, Hindemith's Nobilissima visione and Bartók's Miraculous Mandarin Suite on a RCA High Performance CD: a substantial amount of the Ravel on a CD in the same series; and Nielsen's Fourth Symphony with Morton Gould's fiery Chicago version of the Second on RCA Red Seal. But there's a good deal that hasn't, at least not from RCA/Sony. A coupling of Martinon's Fourth Symphony, an 'alpine symphony' in all but name (which happens to be Altitudes), and which reflects the

composer's love of the Alps, with Peter Mennin's Variation Symphony, his Seventh, is strong meat. Martinon's work offers ample evidence of an ear attuned to all aspects of orchestral sound, whether solo violin (the composer's own instrument), raucous brass or the thunderous presence of timpani. Mennin's symphony alternates rage with troubled repose, an awesome structure superbly performed. I happily recall the 1960s RCA vinyl release of Varèse's Arcana, a veritable starburst unknown to me before then and a recording that for a sense of ordered chaos tops even its most impressive later rivals.

Martinon's Miraculous Mandarin Suite grips the tension full-on and, like its legendary (mono) Mercury/Chicago forebear under Dorati, captures to a T the work's blend of menace and veiled tenderness. Martinon's Nielsen Fourth has always divided opinion but I love its unbridled physicality, and the glow that Martinon brings to the dawning first minutes of the overture *Helios*. It's good to have Robert Casadesus's busily neoclassical Second Piano Concerto as part of the deal (with the Orchestre National de l'ORTF, the one recording included that emanates from Paris rather than from Chicago), especially with the composer as

soloist, while the presence of finely tailored Bizet, Frank Martin (the benchmark version of his Concerto for seven wind instruments, timpani, percussion and strings), Mendelssohn, Weber (the two clarinet concertos with Benny Goodman) and Ravel – more than was on that High Performance CD, and more refined than the EMI Paris recordings – add to an undeniable bargain, though, as so often is the case with these 'original jacket' affairs, some discs are very short measure.

All performances are treated to sound that is both pin-sharp and remarkably rich in amplitude, if occasionally prone to overload. And there's Martinon's composition teacher Albert Roussel, his Second Bacchus and Ariadne Suite, vigorous and precise but facing significant competition from the mono Paris version that Martinon made in the 1950s and that has just been reissued as part of Jean Martinon: The Philips Legacy. Although less polished than its Chicago successor, the Lamoureux Ariadne Suite No 2 - which is prefaced by an equally distinctive version of the First Suite - captures a fine orchestra operating at white heat, the suite's propulsive finale as thrilling as any on disc. The first CD's highlights are equally vigorous performances of Prokofiev's Classical Symphony and Love for Three Oranges Suite, which are preceded by a trio of Mozart symphonies (Nos 31-33), robust performances, nicely characterised, if not quite in the Beecham, Walter or Szell class.

Debussy's Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune and Fauré's Pavane are memorable, the latter largely on account of the darker middle section, which sounds a good deal more dramatic than on most versions. The other Roussel work included is Le festin de l'araignée, again persuasively pointed, and as for the third disc, an excitable L'apprenti sorcier, a warmly textured account of Honegger's Pastorale d'été, Falla's El Amor brujo and the one recording in the set previously reissued, Nights in the Gardens of Spain with Eduardo del Puevo, all chock-full of personality. Martinon's Falla presents strong contours and a vivid sense of climate. Needless to say, the mono sound is no match for Martinon's often spectacular Chicago legacy of roughly a decade later but it's perfectly acceptable, and well transferred. Rob Cowan

THE RECORDINGS

'Jean Martinon - Chicago Symphony Orchestra: The Complete Recordings'

RCA Red Seal (\$) (10) 88843 06275-2

'Jean Martinon: The Philips Legacy' Lamoureux Orchestra / Martinon Australian Eloquence ® **3** 480 5588

comprehensive pocket history of the French organ school; a beautifully produced tribute to the art and memory of Marie-Claire Alain; a testament to three centuries of expert French organ builders and to the fine taste of the organist, writer and 'repertoire consultant' for this set, Michel Roubinet. It's hard to know where to start with the 22 discs of L'Orgue français, enclosed in slipcases illustrated with the organs in the set, most of which have been photographed – and played – by Roubinet (the set sells for around £55).

He has filled the 22 discs with over 35 years of recordings and faced some tricky choices. Which Poulenc concerto recording to select? The first, accompanied with biting intensity by Jean Martinon: as Roubinet remarks in his booklet-note, the Poulenc is 'a reading of devastating ferocity and tragedy'. Which Couperin Masses? Her last of three, on the superbly preserved Cliquot organ in Poitiers, more dominant in this set than any other instrument. Its character is on less overt display in her 1997 version of de Grigny's Livre d'orgue, but wait: the set's one happy indulgence is also to include her first attempt (long unavailable, like much else here) at this textbook of the French organ Mass, with gloriously untempered tuning as though Jean-François Lépine had just climbed down from the case at Saint-Sacerdos in Sarlat when he built the instrument in 1752.

Alain honoured the music of her brother Jehan throughout her career, and Roubinet/Erato have followed suit, with the electrically exciting *Trois danses* from 1962 up to several more undemanding short pieces, set down in 1999, which nonetheless exhibit Jehan's curiously original melodic twists on a 42-stop 'house' instrument built by their father Albert and now housed in a Swiss abbey: a touching piece of living history.

The next closest example of an Alain family organ is the Cavaillé-Coll at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, at which Marie-Claire succeeded her father as titulaire, represented here at its most gentle, in accompaniment to three lovely Fauré motets, and spectacularly cavernous, in Widor's Sixth Symphony. Taking a tour d'horizon of her work at the consoles of this iconic figure in 19th-century organ-building – the Strad of the organ? – illustrates how in Alain's playing flair never compromises clarity, and vice versa, even in the more bombastic stretches of Widor and Vierne.

The set may reflect a criticism heard over the years that she could have done



Marie-Claire Alain alongside the Cavaillé-Coll organ at Saint-Germain-en-Laye

more for composers of her own and later generations. There's nothing of her father's classmate and her teacher Marcel Dupré, little Messiaen (*La nativité*) and Duruflé (the Prelude and Fugue in memory of Jehan) – but the final disc includes an intricate and unpredictable concerto by Charles Chaynes (*b*1925) who is still far too little heard outside France, and she makes a case for the mystic sprawl of the Sixth Symphony (with orchestra) of Jacques Charpentier (*b*1933).

Perhaps her greatest legacy lies in the revival and imparting of specific character to the stars of the French Baroque. Lebègue, Nivers, Marchand, Dumage: names in books until she put flesh on scholarly bones with unfailing rhythmic vitality (not sheer speed). Her ornamentation may be less florid than many organists would now favour, her registration choices sometimes more sober, but a dancing pulse is the anchor-point of her imagination: try the *Suite du premier ton* by Guilain on a lavishly appointed

Valtrin organ at Saint-Christophe, Belfort (if only the booklet listed specifications), boasting a splendidly pungent Cromorne and incense-laden Voix Humaine. There are lots of juicy cornet-led Noëls by Balbastre, Daquin and Dandrieu (as well as his outrageous Messe de Saint-Hubert, with a full complement of hunting horns) that are just too much fun to be saved up until next Christmas but she doesn't raid the sweet shop of stops all at once. Indeed, her restraint at a point of high drama such as de Grigny's Récit de tierce en taille, or a little Nazard solo by Dagincour, lingers in the memory long after the mocked-up blood and thunder of Dubois, Guilmant and Boëllmann have faded in the echo of Saint-Sulpice. Alain's music-making, like the instruments she played, was built to last.

Peter Quantrill

THE RECORDING

'L'Orgue Français' Marie-Claire Alain *org* **with various artists**Erato (§) (22 discs) 2564 63106-4



David Patrick Stearns reviews Poulenc's Carmelites from Paris:

'The outcome puts the opera's characters and narrative into a sharper focus and at a higher emotional pitch' ▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 92



Mike Ashman sees the final part of Nemirova's Frankfurt Ring:

'Kränzle's Gunther and Frank's Hagen are a colossally defined pair of characters'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 92

Bizet	AND SOME	
Les pêcheurs de perles		
Patrizia Ciofi sop	Leïla	
Dmitry Korchak ten	Nadir	
Dario Solari bar	Zurga	
Roberto Tagliavini bass	Nourabad	
Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro di San Carlo,		
Naples / Gabriele Ferro		

Stage director Fabio Sparvoli Video director Davide Mancini C Major Entertainment 🖲 🙅 719508; € 719604 (118' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O • s) Recorded live, October 23-25, 2012



From Naples comes a less than sharp revival of Bizet's best nearly-nearly opera. The Pearl Fishers is always worth hearing for

its gorgeous tunes and the composer's most individual selection of a libretto's conflicts that inspired him – jealousy under the shadow of death, as usual, in the lead and clearly anticipating the Carmen of some 11 years in the future.

Unfortunately, this predictable-looking traditional production – ye olde imaginary Ceylon on beach bleachers costumed in yards of Indian over-material with tubes of dark tan make-up on the skin – uses the version of the score popularised (and cannibalised) after Bizet's death by his publishers. The main theme of that duet ('Au fond du temple saint') is not only repeated as the climax of the number itself in Act 1, instead of the development Bizet wrote, but frequently revived thereafter as a kind of ersatz Fate motif. Its other crimes include changing the tempo of the Act 2 chorus finale and inserting a (very Victorian) trio by Godard into Act 3, although the staging here does spare Zurga an added grisly death.

Like the opera itself, all comes to life on this DVD at 'je reste', when Patrizia Ciofi's Leïla – a fluent and fluid display with beautiful tone of the score's tricky coloratura - declares her intention to stay

watching over the pearl diving despite being compromised by the presence of potential lover Dmitry Korchak's Nadir. The Russian tenor has a good lyric voice for the part but some trouble early on with Bizet's higher-lying phrases, which also discomfort his rival Dario Solari's Zurga, again a mostly apt voice for the role. Gabriele Ferro's conducting subtly maintains the tension of the evening without histrionics. The chorus and some rather unfit-looking dancers seem some way from their best. Not too many rivals in the field, but for DVD Dynamic's Venice Pier Luigi Pizzi production is in better shape and the old, strongly cast Plasson EMI recording provides a worth-hearing reconstruction of Bizet's original. Mike Ashman

Selected comparisons: Plasson (1/90^R) (EMI) 749837-2 Viotti (5/05) (DYNA) 22 33459

Burry

Baby Kintyre	
Laura Albino sop	Jill
Benjamin Covey bar	George
James McLennan ten	Bob
Shannon Mercer sop	Aunt Della
Eileen Nash VOC	Rita
Krisztina Szabó mez	Alla Mae
Giles Tomkins bass-bar	Uncle Wesley
Raby Kintyre Chamber Ensemble /	

Dáirine Ní Mheadhra Canadian Music Centre F CMCCD20314

(61' • DDD)



Babies suffer a dire fate in opera tossed into the fire (Il trovatore) or

thrown under the ice (Jenůfa) - their innate innocence raising the dramatic stakes just about as high as they can go. In Baby Kintyre (2009), the infant has already been dead more than 80 years when found in the floorboards of a Toronto house, its identity completely unknown with no DNA trail to follow. So the opera's drama

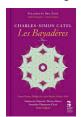
centres around the many unknown factors while revelations dribble out, one by one, in the style of a 1940s radio serial, its periodic cliffhangers translating well to chamber opera.

With a remarkably convincing dramatic tone, librettist/composer Dean Burry parcelled the story into episodes, framing it with the present-day characters who speak more than sing as they discover the child, but with mostly sung flashbacks into a narrative assembled from hazy memories and feverish speculation. Hyper-realistic sound effects characteristic of radio serials provide the invisible scenic design. The homey, candid, plain-spoken qualities of the libretto keep the genre from seeming too contrived, while the music (which weaves in popular songs of the 1920s, including 'By the light of the silvery moon') so completely seizes on every dramatic situation (though with a light touch) you hardly notice the lack of any harmonic stability. Cast members are all convincing radio actors who are able to project complete personalities into their spoken and sung voices, most especially Eileen Nash as a girl who grew up in the house and asks a lot of questions the adults around here don't want to answer.

Though plenty engaging and effective in it own modest terms, the opera doesn't feel complete. With the baby's death so central to the plot, the opera needs to suggest how its characters weighed their options. As it is, you're left assuming a lot, mainly that the baby didn't have a proper burial because it was born out of wedlock. How were the characters able to live with it? Might that be another episode? As it is, the only satisfying resolution is found in the disc's appendix, which has two Canadian Broadcasting Company radio segments about the real-life incident and the eventful emotional journey of the man who found the baby. David Patrick Stearns

Calei	
Les bayadères	
Chantal Santon sop	Laméa
Philippe Do ten	Démaly

Mathias Vidal ten	Rustan/Indian Chief
Katia Velletaz sop	Ixora/First Bayadère
Jennifer Borghi sopDi	vané/Second Bayadère
Mélodie Ruvio contr	Dévéda/Third Bayadère
Frédéric Caton bar	Hydérane
Thomas Bettinger ten	Rutrem
Eric Martin-Bonnet bass	Salem/Maratte/Iranès
Thill Mantero bar	Narséa
Kareen Durand sop	Coryphée/Bayadère
Svetoslav Obretenov Nation	nal Bulgarian Choir;
Solamente Naturali; Musica	Florea / Didier Talpain
Ediciones Singulares © 2 E	S1016 (140' • DDD • T/t)



The latest addition to the Palazzetto Bru Zane's series of once well-known, now forgotten, French operas takes us to a fascinating

example of early orientalism. Dating from 1810, Charles-Simon Catel's *Les bayadères* sits midway chronologically between Mozart's *Entführung* and the more lavish evocations of the East that would become a staple of *grand opéra*. Musically, however, it often feels much closer to the Mozart, with just a sprinkling of 'Turkish' effects to offer local colour, and passages of priestly solemnity that sound like offcuts from *Die Zauberflöte*.

As Gerard Condé's excellent accompanying essay explains, there's a great deal borrowed from that paragon of Second Empire opera, Spontini's La vestale (1807), both in terms of the Gluckian sincerity of its score and its plot. Here the earlier work's vestal virgin becomes a favoured bayadère, Laméa - a sacred dancer who, like Spontini's Julia, is also sworn to celibacy. The Rajah Démaly loves her but is obliged to marry a member of his harem. A subplot, though, sees her and her fellow bayadères save their kingdom from invaders with their charms, an episode that must have set pulses racing at the time, especially uncomplicated by the colonial angst that would colour later exoticism.

Catel's score wafts along decorously at first, offering a delightful semi-comic number for a trio in which three catty members of the harem enumerate each other's faults. But the music gains in stature as the plot unfurls. There are some impressive set-piece scenes, including two powerful marches (one seems to echo *Figaro*, the other to look forward to *Les Troyens*), and the whole thing builds up impressive dramatic momentum.

Didier Talpain draws punchy if slightly relentless playing from the combined forces of Solamente Naturali and Musica Florea. There are fine soloists, too, led by Philippe Do's eloquent, clean-voiced Démaly and Chantal Santon's Laméa, sung with commitment if not an ideally bright timbre. The vivid chorus is often balanced a little far back but otherwise the engineering is clear. I'm not sure if *Les bayadères* would stand up in the theatre but it's a fine work, and this lavishly presented set is most welcome for letting us hear it. **Hugo Shirley**

Cilea Adriana Lecouvreur Magda Olivero sop..... Adriana Juan Oncina ten.... ...Maurizio Sesto Bruscantini bar Michonnet Adriana Lazzarini mez......Princesse de Bouillon Enrico Campi bass-bar Prince de Bouillon Piero de Palma tenAbbé de Chazeuil Elena Barcis SOD..... Jouvenot Anna di Stasio mez......Dangeville Vittorio Pandano tenPoisson Augusto Frati ten

Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro San Carlo, Naples / Oliviero de Fabritiis

Testament mono © ② SBT2 1501 (132' • ADD) Recorded live at the King's Theatre, Edinburgh, August 27, 1963



Like other contemporary secondstage *verismo* dramas, *Adriana Lecouvreur*

is chock-a-block with unfulfilled sexual promise and obsessive moving of period furniture. It has a complex plot and the long, complicated cast list spends a lot of time in concealment, a kind of dramatic equivalent of the (over-)richly scored music then dominating concert hall and opera house. It's a somewhat crazy yet oddly compelling story of the death by poisoned violets of the real-life early-18th-century Comédie Française actress.

If you've ever investigated this opera's generous discography you'll have come across the myriad of live performances given by Magda Olivero following a legendary return to the stage in 1951. Testament's tribute to the singer takes the (well-remastered) form of one of these, an Edinburgh Festival broadcast from 1963 where she replaced Renata Tebaldi. It serves as not only a memento of the singer but an exciting ride through the work in an already-existing and played-in production from Naples.

In a candid autobiographical note, Olivero denied that she had a voice in terms of something individually memorable or distinctive but noted her ability to create atmosphere and personality. That's certainly true of this performance in an opera where the title-role is nearly always heard in conflict – be it misunderstanding the motivation of her soldier lover Maurizio (a passionate but sometimes pushed and not always vocally secure Juan Oncina), having what would prove to be a fatal row with the jealous Princess of Bouillon (the mezzo 'baddie' role histrionically taken here by Adriana Lazzarini) or putting up with the frustrated love of stage director Michonnet (a moving Sesto Bruscantini). Oliviero de Fabritiis, a regular conductor of noted vocal debuts and of this score, finds a just mixture of pell-mell action and Romantic introspection without overdoing either.

Other rivals in the field include Decca's recent DVD with Gheorgiu and Kaufmann, and the super-complete Sutherland/Bonynge recording with WNO forces – but the combination of live snapshot and Olivero's special link with the title-role make this issue essential. Mike Ashman Selected comparisons:

Elder (DECC) № 074 3459DH; ≥ 074 3460DH Bonynge (DECC) → 475 7906DM2

Mozart · Mysliveček

Mozart La finta giardiniera - Geme la tortorella. Idomeneo - Andro ramingo e solo; Se il padre perdei. Lucio Silla - Ah, se il crudel periglio; Vanne, t'affretta Mysliveček Artaserse - Deh, resprirar lasciatemi; Va tra le selve Ircane. Il gran Tamerlano - Nacqui in seno alla sventura; Sento nel alma nia. Medonte, re di Epiro - Dov'è, ah dov'è, son io

Simona Šaturová sop with Frédérique Friess sop Michaela Kapustová mez Richard Samek ten L'Armonia Terrena / Zdeněk Klauda Nibiru (P. NIO1502231 (68' • DDD • T/t)



Like the muchmissed Lucia Popp, Simona Šaturová is a Slovak soprano from

Bratislava. Her Haydn disc (Orfeo) was an Editor's Choice in November 2009; here she offers an interesting selection of opera arias (plus two quartets) by Mozart and Mysliveček. The composers knew each other in the 1770s and Mozart wrote warmly of his friend in his letters. The numbers from *Il gran Tamerlano* (Milan, 1771) are nicely contrasted. In 'Sento nel alma', Asteria pours out her enmity towards Tamerlano in coloratura, while in 'Nacqui in seno' she is resigned to her fate. Šaturová encompasses both emotions with her bright, clear tone.

She is less successful in the aria from Mozart's *Lucio Silla*, which needs the explosive force of a Cecilia Bartoli: here the coloratura sounds careful rather than

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dramatic. But there's no faulting her passion in the G minor outburst of 'Va tra le selve ircane' from Mysliveček's *Artaserse* (Naples, 1774). Even better is the 10-minute scena from *Medonte* (Rome, 1780), which moves freely between aria and accompanied recitative. Šaturová vividly conveys the plight of the imprisoned Selene.

'Se il padre perdei' gives the woodwind soloists of L'Armonia Terrena (not a period band) a chance to shine. There's a fascinating connection between the quartets from *Artaserse* and *Idomeneo* (1781): the same key of E flat, and an identical verbal phrase. There are errors and omissions in the booklet but texts and translations are given. This is a most rewarding issue.

Richard Lawrence

Poulenc



i ouiciic	VIDEO BiorayDisc
Dialogues des Carmélite	s
Philippe Rouillon bar	Marquis de la Force
Patricia Petibon sop	Blanche de la Force
Topi Lehtipuu ten	Chevalier de la Force
Rosalind Plowright mez	Madame de Croissy
Véronique Gens sop	Madame Lidoine
Sophie Koch mez	Mère Marie
Sandrine Piau sop	Soeur Constance
Annie Vavrille mez	Mère Jeanne
Sophie Pondjiclis mez	Soeur Mathilde
Matthieu Lécroart bass-ba	nr
	TI: /DI :: /C I

Jérémy Duffau ten......First Officer
Yuri Kissin bass.....Second Officer

Chorus of the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, Paris; Philharmonia Orchestra / Jérémie Rhorer

Stage director Olivier Py

Video director François-René Martin
Warner Classics № ② 2564 62206-9;

© \$\infty\$ 2564 62195-3 (166' • NTSC • 16:9 •

DD5.1 & PCM stereo • O • s)

Recorded live at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, Paris, December 21, 2013



Though hardly a star vehicle, this *Dialogues* of the Carmelites features four celebrated Gallic sopranos, any

one of whom would be a significant attraction, directed by distinguished, individualistic artists both from the pit (Jérémie Rhorer) and on the stage (Olivier Py). The outcome in this convergence of talent isn't exactly revisionist but puts the opera's characters and narrative into a sharper focus and at a higher than usual emotional pitch.

In the ascetic spirit of the Carmelite order, the orchestra is stripped bare of any

orchestral frosting in a sound palette that's more like Britten's than Poulenc's sacred works that were obviously a point of reference for this story of a religious order killed in the French Revolution. Visually, the production's never-dreary study in greys is interrupted mostly by the red hair shared by Patricia Petibon (Blanche) and Topi Lehtipuu (as Blanche's brother) – as well as a backdrop that perhaps represents the Great Beyond, with white and sky-blue abstract shapes suggesting late-period Matisse. By the time the Carmelites are imprisoned in Act 3, designer Pierre-André Weitz has only an endless field of bars, telegraphing the hopelessness of the Carmelites. The death scene is so simple that describing it doesn't spoil the surprise: the nuns are simply lined up onstage and leave one by one with each chop of the guillotine. It's here that one must give castwide praise for the profoundly eloquent singing heard in these final moments.

Petibon's high-strung Blanche looks a bit old beyond her years; heightened perception of the world's ills has worn heavily upon her. Even in the convent, her more serene lower-vibrato white tone feels more imposed from without than coming up from within. Elsewhere, the bleakness can be relentless. Véronique Gens is a lean, nervous (rather than benevolent) Madame Lidoine. Sandrine Piau makes the usually more playful Sister Constance a more intense philosophical sparring partner with Blanche in the convent's ongoing psychological self-flagellation. As Mother Marie, Sophie Koch's strong presence puts a particularly sharp point on the severity of Carmelite life, the members of which are constantly positioning themselves on the highest possible moral ground.

Rosalind Plowright maintains great vocal and dramatic tension in the Mother Superior's overly long death scene. Ultimately, the production and performances take the opera beyond the nuns' story but question the moral responsibility of martyrdom. Do they die in vain? Or does their fatal commitment to their beliefs somehow elevate society's zeitgeist?

David Patrick Stearns

Puccini

Manon Lescaut	
Ana María Martínez sop	Manon Lescaut
Andrea Bocelli ten	Des Grieux
Javier Arrey bar	Lescaut
Maurizio Muraro bass	Geronte
Matthew Peña ten	Edmondo
Chorus of the Generalitat Valence	iana; Orchestra
of the Comunitat Valenciana / Pl	ácido Domingo
Decca © 2 478 7490DH (119' • D	DD • T/t)



Given that Jonas Kaufmann has recently taken on the role of Des Grieux, first in

London and then in Munich, it is a fair bet that one or both of those stage productions will soon turn up on DVD. There has not been a new audio-only recording of *Manon Lescaut* on a major label for the best part of 20 years. Might this Decca set, a showcase for Andrea Bocelli, turn out to be the last?

The balance places the orchestra so close that it is possible to hear the players turning their pages, while the chorus seem to be banished to the back of the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia in Valencia. When the star enters, he is up front with a glamorous acoustic glow around him. This takes a while to get used to, though it is not unpleasant, and Bocelli makes a lighter-than-usual, youthful-sounding Des Grieux. At his best he sings with broad phrasing and a natural Italianate colour and style. When the voice comes under pressure, though, it has no depth of tone to call upon and the sound quickly turns shallow and hard.

At his side Ana María Martínez offers a class act as Manon, youthful, spirited, with quickness of emotion alongside a hardbitten streak, though the voice is apt to turn thin and a touch shrill at the top. The three supporting men - Matthew Peña as Edmondo, Javier Arrey as Lescaut and Maurizio Muraro as the characterful, older Geronte - are well cast. The Orquestra de la Comunitat Valenciana are not in the top league. Though Plácido Domingo, as conductor, puts on spurts of energy at high-powered moments, much elsewhere is flaccid and rather foursquare. For comparison I took down off the shelf the 1993 Metropolitan Opera recording, also from Decca, with Freni and Pavarotti. Neither was in the first flush of youth by this point, but what vocal and orchestral magnificence. Nothing here compares.

Richard Fairman

Selected comparison: Levine (11/93^R) (DECC) 478 3053DM2



Dramatic tension: Rosalind Plowright as the Mother Superior in Poulenc's Dialogues des Carmélites from Paris



The conclusion to Frankfurt's current *Ring* presents an unashamedly straightforward reading of the work that will appeal to

those who don't like their dramaturgical thinking done for them. If that's a double-edged compliment, so be it. But it shouldn't distract from *Personenregie* – clearly the focus of director Vera Nemirova's work – which has secured acute textual awareness from a well-chosen cast.

A gripping performance of the Waltraute scene is clinched often by the listener, Brünnhilde. Here Susan Bullock takes us on a little masterclass of attention and support that sums up all that's best about this show: childish hope-against-

hope, anger, tears, defiance and incredulity when sister doesn't buy into her new love. And, if not all the singing shares Bullock's accuracy and tonal purity - her Siegfried, Lance Ryan, who gives a terrifically convincing reading of the suddenly rather early Romantic hero with which Wagner leaves us in Act 2, strays rather often from comfortable line and pitch - her colleagues never let the drama drift. Kränzle's memorably weak Gunther - he becomes unusually the focal mirror for Siegfried's death - and Gregory Frank's almost punch-drunk Hagen, frightening without melodrama, are a colossally defined pair of characters.

Nemirova finds lots of little fringe-theatre touches to point up the action — lipstick and a blindfold to indicate Brünnhilde's overnight separation from Siegfried-as-Gunther, placards and a loudhailer to present the defrocked Rhinedaughters as protesters for the return of their gold to the river. Weigle continues a mellifluous, light but dynamically aware approach to the score, failing only to deliver the last degree of climactic power. Sound good; filming a little unsure. It's a worthy overall company achievement and would make a fine first, or early, Götterdümmerung to watch. Mike Ashman

IN THE STUDIC

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

- Bach on an Italian organ
 Organist Luca Guglielmi has recorded keyboard music by Bach from two notable collections those of Padre Giovanni Battista Martini and Friedrich Wilhelm Rust. Guglielmi recorded on the organ at the church of San Nicolao in Vercelli, Italy, and Vivat will release the disc in May.
- Thompson's 'Russian Album'
 The Amsterdam Sinfonietta and violinist/ director Candida Thompson (below) will continue their series of concept albums with 'The Russian Album', pairing Tchaikovsky's Serenade for strings with a string-ensemble arrangement of Arensky's String Quartet. Channel Classics will release the resulting recording in May.



· Scriabin in Moscow

The Russian National Orchestra and **Mikhail Pletnev** will mark this year's Scriabin
anniversary with a new recording of the
maverick composer's First Symphony and *Poem of Ecstasy*; the orchestra will be joined
for the latter by soloists and the Moscow
Conservatory Chamber Choir for the
sessions at the start of March. The disc will
be released by Pentatone in July.

Bachs from Vox Luminis
Lionel Meunier and his ensemble Vox
Luminis have returned to German repertoire
for their latest project - a recording of
motets by Johann Sebastian Bach and his
forebears Johann Christoph and Johann
Michael. The two-disc collection will include
works for double choir which 'blend the old
polyphonic tradition with the fashionable
expressions of the madrigal' and will be
released by Ricercar in May.

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REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

Sviatoslav Richter at 100

The legendary RCA and Columbia recordings by the mercurial Russian pianist, all in one box-set

his month (March) marks the centenary of the birth of Sviatoslav Richter, a unique figure in the annals of piano-playing, a performing colossus with a repertoire to match; austere, mercurial, cool one moment, burningly intense the next; and, when recorded live and on form, a force of nature that swept all before him. But the quality of Richter's discography is maddeningly uneven, a mix of sublime intuition, bullish aggression and seeming indifference, while the countless recital and concert tapes that have come down to us are, in terms of sound reproduction, just as variable. This 18-disc 'Complete Album Collection' of live and studio recordings for RCA and Columbia (there were copyright issues with the Bach '48', apparently) typifies the musical glories and technical problems that beset Richter's legacy.

At its best, as in the RCA releases of stereo recordings from Carnegie Hall and the Mosque Theatre in Newark, astounding isn't the word: two performances of Prokofiev's Sixth Sonata, a work of which Richter himself gave the public premiere in the autumn of 1940, defy belief, their mixture of ferocious attack and quiet contemplation positively disorientating, the brilliance of the super-fast finale, with its imitated reveilles, a miracle of digital dexterity. The fact that Haydn's Sonata in C, HobXVI/50, sits quite happily on the same programme testifies to how Richter could encompass witty classicism and what was at the time confrontational modernism within a couple of hours or less. The same recital – which largely doubles repertoire played at Carnegie Hall – includes a brilliant if freewheeling Chopin Fourth Scherzo, plus translucent

Ravel and Rachmaninov. Also from Carnegie Hall we have 10 of Prokofiev's *Visions fugitives*, sculpted to perfection, some explosive, others withdrawn, and regrettably interspersed, here and there, with bursts of applause that quite spoil the mood.

The mono Carnegie Hall recitals that were recorded in-house and that Columbia originally issued as a series of LPs (we're also given some first releases and certain tracks previously only available in Japan) are another story,

'Sviatoslav Richter was a heady mix of brawn, brain and billowing emotion'

sound-wise. Here the piano is more recessed; there are coughs and splutters to contend with and the occasional rumble of a subway train beneath the hall. And yet, again, much of the playing is miraculous. Another Prokofiev Sixth matches its stereo rivals and there's an Eighth that, for muscularity, brilliance and poetic address, is one of the most imposing ever recorded. A sequence of Rachmaninov Preludes, although not always note-perfect, vies with Horowitz or Rachmaninov himself, whether lyrical or storm-tossed.

Beethoven also fares well, though Sony's excellent annotator Jed Distler and I disagree over Richter's chosen tempo for the sombre *Allegretto* of Op 14 No 1, which Richter takes extremely slowly. I love it but JD is surely right in thinking it disproportionately broad. Other sonatas included are Op 2 No 3, Op 26, Op 54 and two conceptually similar *Appassionatas*, one live, the other studio, and a riveting version of Scriabin's Fifth Sonata.

Schumann's C major *Fantasie* towers over its EMI rival, while music by Debussy and Chopin showcases contrasting aspects of Richter's art.

Then there are the concertos, the Brahms B flat recorded in Chicago with the Symphony Orchestra under Erich Leinsdorf, clean, energetic and straight as a die though, for me, a little disengaged, not as wholly involving as live versions under Mravinsky, Georgescu and Maazel. Two separate takes on Beethoven's First Concerto make for interesting comparisons, one from Boston with the Boston Symphony under Charles Munch, recorded in 1960; the other taped live at the 1988 Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival with Christoph Eschenbach conducting. The one with Munch, though hampered by an electronic hum, sports the more handsome orchestral profile, with crisper playing from Richter himself. The later version is more relaxed, certainly in the first movement, though persuasive touches abound. Disc 17, a mixed programme of solo works by Brahms, Liszt and Schubert, emanates from recitals in Lübeck, Hasselburg and Aldeburgh (the latter on CD for the first time).

Passing technical issues aside, this set is an artistic triumph, more than ample proof that Sviatoslav Richter was a heady mix of brawn, brain and billowing emotion, someone who could grab you at will then let you go. Modest and publicity-shy as we're told he was, at heart he must surely have known his true worth. **6**

THE RECORDINGS



'Sviatoslav Richter: The Complete Album Collection – Live and Studio Recordings for RCA and Columbia' Sony (§) (§) 88843 01470-2



Sviatoslav Richter: the legendary pianist is celebrated this month in collections from Sony and Melodiya

Richter's December Nights

Sony Classical is not alone in its Richter celebrations. Melodiya has come up with a collection dedicated to performances recorded during Moscow's 1985 'December Nights' Festival, mostly chamber music, save for some Chopin - the Polonaise-Fantaisie and Fourth Ballade - which catch Richter thoughtfully tempering the flames rather than fanning them. The highlight of the set is surely Schubert's big A major 'Grand Duo' Violin Sonata, introduced from the stage by (I presume) Richter himself, with violinist Oleg Kagan, a most sensitive player, poetic and always appreciative of the music's inherent singing lines, though his quickly pulsing vibrato won't be to all tastes. The second movement really leaps out at you and Richter seems to have been in an affable frame of mind. He and Kagan's widow Natalia Gutman (Kagan died in 1990 while in his forties) offer a most poetic account of Chopin's Cello Sonata (beam up 2'50" into the first movement for ample evidence), complete with encored accounts of the Largo and finale. Schumann is represented by a tender and persuasive performance of the First Piano Trio with Kagan and Gutman, and the Fantasy Pieces, Op 73, with the clarinettist Anatoli Kamyshev, a performance infused with poetic feeling and, in the third of the pieces, an abundance of spontaneity. Richter joins viola player Yuri Bashmet on assertive form for the Märchenbilder, Op 113. Excellent sound with an audience that, for the most part, is mercifully quiet.

THE RECORDING



Chopin. Schubert. Schumann Richter pf Kamyshev c/ Kagan vn Bashmet va Gutman vc Melodiya (1) (2) MELCD100 2204

Oistrakh in his prime

One of the happiest of Richter's musical partnerships was with his violinist peer and equal David Oistrakh, as attested by numerous live duo-sonata recordings. Anyone who is as yet unfamiliar with the intelligence, urbanity, warmth and sheer good taste of Oistrakh's art could do a good deal worse than invest in a recent Melodiya CD that couples works by Tchaikovsky and Glazunov. Oistrakh's 1948 recording of the Glazunov Concerto with the USSR Symphony Orchestra under Kyrill Kondrashin served as my introduction to that work (on an old Gala LP that seemed as if it was pressed on tin), and few if any versions that I've heard since are as seductive or as musically phrased. Melodiya also has a live recording on its books from roughly the same period - Russian Revelation was at one time considering a first UK release - but this is quite wonderful, even though here, as elsewhere on the CD, the orchestra is very backwardly balanced.

An account of Tchaikovsky's Sérénade mélancolique from 1945 suffers some distant shellac surface noise but the familiar Oistrakh poise shines through all the same. The highlight of the programme

– Kondrashin and his orchestra are present in all three works – is a Tchaikovsky Concerto from 1957, Oistrakh sounding as if he's playing by your side, with the orchestra tucked away somewhere in the next village, but never mind: even considering versions under Konwitschny, Rozhdestvensky and Ormandy, this is a surefire winner, brilliant yet genial and, as ever with Oistrakh, filled with sincere feeling.

THE RECORDING



Glazunov. Tchaikovsky
Violin Concertos, etc
Oistrakh vn USSR SO /
Kondrashin
Melodiya ® MELCD100 2261

Sargent's Rachmaninov

Listening to Sir Malcolm Sargent conduct the BBC Symphony Orchestra in Rachmaninov's Third Symphony which, as annotator Robert Matthew-Walker helpfully tells us, Sargent conducted no fewer than five times at the Proms, is a little like witnessing passion from afar. True, Sargent draws some rich textures from his orchestra and he seems securely in touch with the work's ingenious design; but phrase-shaping is rather foursquare and the start of the finale lacks brio, though the accelerating excitement of the symphony's closing pages more than makes up for it. Still, Golovanov, Ormandy and Rachmaninov himself are not seriously challenged. That was 1953, whereas this generally

excellent set of transfers opens with Sargent's own marmoreal orchestration of the once-ubiquitous C sharp minor piano Prelude, in which he leads the LSO in 1931. But the real prize on this CD dates from 1947 and involves the Liverpool Philharmonic and pianist Cyril Smith for an energetic and musically sympathetic account of Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto, Smith approximating the lyrical and strongly accented playing style of the composer himself, Sargent and the orchestra offering him highly animated support – in other words a real performance, well worth preserving.

THE RECORDING



Rachmaninov Piano Concerto
No 2. Symphony No 3, etc
Smith pf LSO; Liverpool PO;
BBC SO / Sargent
Guild

Guild

GHCD2423

Books



Peter Dickinson on a new life of an American maverick composer:

'Granade shows that the grim predicament of the transient population during the Depression is also central to Harry Partch'



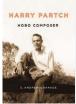
Jeremy Nicholas reviews the essays of a leading UK chamber pianist:

'Tomes brings to the page the same care, attention to detail and immaculate phrasing that she brings to her keyboard-playing'

Harry Partch: Hobo Composer

By S Andrew Granade

University of Rochester Press/Boydell & Brewer, HB, 368pp, £19.99. ISBN 978-1-58046-495-6



It is difficult to imagine a career more likely to end in total failure than that of the legendary American pioneer

Harry Partch (1901-74). He considered the tuning system of equal temperament a mistake, which disposes of a lot of music, and developed his own work in a scale with the octave divided into 43 components. That puts paid to most conventional instruments, so Partch invented a fleet of his own – and many of them sound fabulous. He detested conventional concerts; refused any kind of institutional connection until later in life, and then only intermittently; and spent about 14 years as a hobo on the road.

That experience is documented in his work. Partch eventually reached an audience through recordings, involving his own performances and later those with colleagues, and he marketed the discs himself. But live performances have necessarily been rare. The original instruments were fragile and it has taken some time for replicas to be made. The Harry Partch Foundation is directed by Danlee Mitchell, who met Partch in 1956, worked closely with him and has put on performances. The Foundation's website, Corporeal Meadows (corporeal. com), lists Partch events across the US in 2012. An important European initiative came from Heiner Goebbels, director of the Ruhrtriennale in Bochum, Germany. Under percussionist and instrument builder Thomas Meixner, 32 of Partch's instruments were reconstructed and the Ensemble Musikfabrik of Cologne learnt to play them. Then, Partch's theatre piece Delusion of the Fury was produced and given in Germany and at the Edinburgh

Festival last year to some acclaim. That was a breakthrough but there had been others, including reissues of Partch's own recordings. In 2003 Nonesuch released *US Highball* in a version made by Ben Johnston, who worked with Partch, for the Kronos Quartet with David Barron as vocalist (12/03). This showed, as with some of the player-piano works of Nancarrow, that the composer's original ideas could gain wider currency in sympathetic adaptations for standard instruments.

Partch's parents went to China as Protestant missionaries in 1883 but his father rebelled against trying to convert the Chinese and returned at the time of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. He then took poorly paid jobs in Arizona and New Mexico. Partch hated his father, who died just as he graduated from Albuquerque High School, but his mother was influential until she was killed in a streetcar accident in Los Angeles in 1920. Partch was then on his own, taking odd jobs proof-reading, following the harvest as cheap farm labour, washing dishes and jumping trains. He suffered extraordinary privation through his refusal to compromise with society in any way and it is astounding how he remained dedicated to his vision of a new kind of music, rooted, he claimed, in ancient traditions going back to the Greeks and beyond.

There were crumbs of recognition: a Carnegie Corporation grant covered a trip to Europe in 1934. In Dublin he met WB Yeats and impressed him by singing/chanting to his adapted viola. Back home Partch got some support from composers who uncomprehendingly recognised his authenticity. In 1944 he had a League of Composers concert in New York and he received two Guggenheim grants in 1943/44.

Partch published his own hefty theoretical text, *Genesis of a Music*, and his collected writings, *Bitter Music*, edited by Thomas McGeary, appeared in 1991. Bob Gilmore's authoritative *Harry Partch: a Biography* (Yale UP: 1998) was a significant landmark from an author and editor who has sadly

died at 53 – see his recently published study of Claude Vivier. Now Granade's book, Harry Partch: Hobo Composer, focuses on the life of migrant workers. The entire social scene is explored in depth as a context for Partch. Granade shows that the grim predicament of the transient population during the Depression, depicted in films, the novels of Steinbeck and the songs of Woody Guthrie, is also central to Partch. But to claim the hobo subculture as the 'quintessential American experience' is going too far. American composers of all types and periods have shared the foundations of European classical music, just as their writers have used the English language: it doesn't make them less American. Granade is often repetitive but he provides new material, including details of Partch's foundation applications, his friendships and his contacts with other composers. His book is an informative supplement to Gilmore's, well produced and cheap at the price, but anyone seriously interested in Partch will need both. Peter Dickinson

Sleeping in Temples

By Susan Tomes

Boydell Press, HB, 263pp, £19.99 ISBN 978-1-84383-975-0



I've always remembered a brief but telling anecdote Susan Tomes tells in an earlier book of hers. In

Out of Silence (Boydell Press: 2010) she recounts how as a nervous 12-year-old she played Chopin's 'fast and intricate' Fantaisie-Impromptu to a visiting aunt. It was 'probably the hardest thing I'd learned so far,' remembered Tomes. She finished the piece but then without any comment the aunt asked her if her niece could play 'Danny Boy'. She did so and 'turned round to see her sitting there with tears pouring down her cheeks. "Danny Boy" had scored where Chopin had failed to touch her.'



Harry Partch, c1970, performing his own music on one of his own instruments

It's an admission that many of her peers might be unwilling to make. Wrapped up in and enraptured by the works of the Great Masters - and without that, how can one become a successful professional? musicians understandably lose sight of the fact that, for the average Jo (and visiting aunt), classical music remains a minority interest, where Katherine Jenkins and Russell Watson are the nearest thing to an opera singer and anyone who can play Für Elise is hailed as the family genius. As Tomes admits in the 'Prelude' of this, her fourth book, 'being a classical musician is something that mystifies people, including the musicians themselves'.

'The ancient Greeks,' she tells us, 'used sometimes to sleep in temples in the hope that the powerful atmosphere would help them to "incubate dreams".' The temples in Susan Tomes's case are the works of great music that have occupied her life. Out of Silence was written in diary form. Sleeping in Temples is a series of extended and unconnected essays on all manner of things musical but written with the same clarity, honesty and questioning spirit. And, like Out of Silence, there were several passages that had me metaphorically punching the air. Here she is, in a chapter entitled 'Play the Contents, not the Container' (an 'enigmatic piece of advice... given by the Hungarian professor György

Sebök whose masterclasses I attended in the 1980s'), worth quoting at length: 'It's a challenge to hear a piece of music afresh when a performance tradition has grown up over decades or longer...A good example in piano music might be Schubert's final piano sonata, the B flat major Sonata, D960. Because of the influence of certain recordings [Tomes is too polite to point fingers] it has become traditional to approach the first movement in particular as the essence of profundity, a kind of statement "ex cathedra"...Yet if you look at the score itself, there is no indication that Schubert intended this tempo, or had this kind of deeply serious and elder-statesmanlike approach in mind...When we hear the opening melody there is no hint of trouble to come...And by playing the opening movement extremely slowly and tragically, the performer allows it to overbalance the other three movements in the sonata.' My thoughts entirely.

The Schubert extract is, I must emphasise, not typical of the book in that Tomes rarely concentrates on a work which those without its acquaintance might find too specialised. Nor is it matters pianistic that dominate. Though it is to those with an interest in classical music whom her book will chiefly appeal, paradoxically it seeks to demystify and illuminate the subject for the average Jo and visiting aunt. Rather, she is concerned

with 'what classical music does, what it feels like to work on it, why I love it, and about some of the challenges of being a classical musician'. How do the members of a string quartet or piano trio make their musical, logistical and financial decisions? (After Tomes's long associations with the Domus and Florestan trios, this is a particularly heartfelt section.) The problem of what to wear for concerts, the value of the older generation's advice and how best to hand down its secrets. Why play from memory? What is 'interpretation'? (Fascinating, but there is no discussion of what part in this is played by a musician's personality.) What is the right instrument for you? Audience coughers (aargh!), rehearsing ('How many other lines of work require 90 per cent of preparation for 10 per cent of time spent in the presence of one's customers?') and – another punch in the air – the often 'dry, remote and largely beside the point' contents of programme notes ('After a codetta, the development section moves into the subdominant...'). Stimulating, insightful, full of ideas and passing anecdotes as she reflects, often wryly, on events drawn from her long career, Tomes brings to the page the same care, fastidious attention to detail and immaculate phrasing that she brings to her keyboard-playing. But then no one ever said life was fair.

Jeremy Nicholas

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Classics RECONSIDERED





Critic **Jeremy Nicholas**and **Andrew Lamb**, for
many years Gramophone's
operetta specialist, reassess
Decca's 1950 D'Oyly Carte
recording of G&S's The Mikado.
Has it stood the test of time?



Gilbert & Sullivan

The Mikado

D'Oyly Carte Opera Company *inc* Margaret Mitchell (Yum-Yum), Martyn Green (Ko-Ko), Ella Hallman (Katisha), Darrell Fancourt (The Mikado), Leonard Osborn (Nanki-Poo), Richard Watson (Pooh-Bah) Alan Styler (Pish-Tush); New Promenade Orchestra / Isidore Godfrey

Naxos mono © ② 8 110176-77
(Originally released as Decca LK4010-1)
Much winsome music is here, a bit
overweightily treated: the men's voices
in chorus sound rather coarse (the
women are better: they do very nicely),
and Pish-Tush needs to convey more
character. When we can't see the actors,
we easily get a prevailing impression of
their being not very cheerful. The male

voices are strong, most are ripe, stout,

Jeremy Nicholas I can't recall when Gramophone last devoted any space to a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. Whether this is due to a dearth of recent recordings or because they have fallen out of favour I'm not sure. I have always had a soft spot for the Decca mono cycle from the early 1950s, and The Mikado strikes me as among the most successful. Perhaps my view is rose-tinted as the two early LPs were part of my parents' limited collection and I played them till the grooves wore smooth, but apart from anything else it is one of the most consistently inspired scores of the canon. Returning to the Town of Titipu (now on an excellent Naxos transfer), one of the main reasons the 1950 recording deserves its classic status is the conducting of Isidore Godfrey.

Andrew Lamb When I was very young my father had the 1936 D'Oyly Carte electrical recording of *The Mikado* on 78s. Once he upgraded to LP it was, for me too, the early

burly, and in various ways fit to fill a theatre, and be clearly heard in it - a good point - but they don't sound like a comedy troupe. 'Three Little Maids' touches a better level of concerted work, and the orchestra is well on time. It may be that the artists are thinking and feeling as if they were in a large hall: there is some sense of our being too close to them - even closer than in the front row of the stalls. The same problem has of course long been in mind as regards orchestral sounds: but one singer can produce a more overwhelming sound than any instrumentalist seems to do. The voice is the trickiest instrument of all.

There is in the finale to Act 1 a great deal of the best of Sullivan's feeling,

1950s mono recordings that were played to distraction in our household. Again, of course, *The Mikado* stood out as a particularly inspired score. You refer to the 'excellent' Naxos transfer. However, internet commentators better informed than I am are very critical of the quality of the transfer, describing it as 'flat with an extremely boxed-in sound' and lacking spread or depth. Apparently there is, or was, a much better CD transfer on the limited-circulation Sounds on CD label.

JN I haven't heard this transfer but I have to disagree with your internet commentators as the Naxos transfer is almost identical to the Decca LP sound – which is indeed 'boxed-in' and lacking 'spread and depth' – or, as some people would describe it, 'dated'. That, to me, is part of its charm and doesn't bother me.

AL More pertinently there is your comment on Isidore Godfrey, who was musical

resource and musicianship: the drama of the Italian opera is seriously touched, and the turning to other spirits is excellently contrived. Katisha is heard to excellent purpose here, and the company works up the power worthily.

The madrigal could be finer in instrumental intonation and vocal balance: pretty good, but the men might listen more to the women, when they are going at it *forte*. Discipline and attack are good: but the music needs a brighter rhythm than it gets, for instance in No 7 of Act 2, the trio and chorus. The orchestra is generally strong enough in support, and comes out well in its own bits. Musically, the opera contains a wealth of felicities, which Sullivan never exceeded. **WR Anderson** (7/50)

director of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company for almost 40 years – from the late 1920s to the late 1960s. When I attended D'Oyly Carte performances in the 1950s and early 1960s it was a matter of astonishment to me that, after conducting Gilbert and Sullivan day in, day out for some 30 years, Godfrey could still conjure up such spirited performances.

JN Yes – brisk, crisp and as fresh as a daisy. He was much loved by the company and, despite the frequent changes of D'Oyly Carte personnel, there is the feeling on this recording of everyone being part of a team, a tightly knit theatrical ensemble all working to the same level.

AL What you say about a tightly knit theatrical ensemble is very much to the point, but in fact the changes of personnel weren't always all that frequent. Besides Godfrey himself, Darrell Fancourt had first appeared with the company in 1920,



'Spirited performance': Isidore Godfrey is one of the main reasons the 1950 Mikado recording deserves its classic status

Martyn Green in 1922, Richard Watson in 1932, and Leonard Osborn and Ella Hallman both in 1937. Altogether it was a team that had worked together for many years and knew their parts inside out.

JN Indeed, yet I wouldn't claim that every individual performance on the 1950 recording is necessarily the best sung and/or acted (with the exception of Martyn Green who, to me, is incomparable). Leonard Osborn, for instance, sounds a little strained at times, but then captures Nanki-Poo's romantic ardour as well as any; some prefer Donald Adams (on the later stereo recording under Godfrey) in the title role, but I can't do without Fancourt's blood-curdling laugh between the verses of 'A more humane Mikado', a tradition he introduced; again, I love the Three Little Maids straight from Roedean though others think them too arch by half. The point is that all the artists are part of the same tradition. As a result, there is not a single duff performance unlike, for example, Sir Geraint Evans as Ko-Ko on the 1956 Sargent recording: 'All of the notes, none of the jokes'.

AL I agree about Leonard Osborn. Not only does he sound strained at times, but there's also a slightly unpleasant nasal quality to his voice. This is one piece of casting where for me the 1957 recording is most obviously superior. There Thomas

Round is a heart-warmingly ardent and romantic suitor. There's also the matter of the stereo sound of the 1957 remake, which seems to me to offer clear advantages for both Sullivan's orchestration and Godfrey's orchestra. Overall this tips the balance for me. I agree, though, that Martyn Green especially is pretty well incomparable, with his characterful and clear-cut enunciation. If I have an alternative preference for Ko-Ko, it's for Clive Revill's cleverly understated and likewise clearly enunciated performance in the 1962 Sadler's Wells Opera recording under Alexander Faris.

JN Yes, Clive Revill is a joy with the same weaselly, slightly camp manner as Green. I have to concur about the superior sound of the 1957 remake, its benefits and the still-remarkable vivacity of Godfrey's conducting, but Peter Pratt's Ko-Ko sounds weedy and anxious, and Ann Drummond-Grant (Godfrey's then wife) sounds almost pretty compared with Ella Hallman's Katisha (1950) who is clearly 'a most unattractive old thing'. For me the Decca remake, and the Sadler's Wells and Royston Nash recordings (let alone the Mackerras account which suffers from having too many opera singers and too few G&S specialists) have two ingredients missing: spontaneity and the palpable sense of fun present throughout the 1950 recording. Everything may be sung better (and

CLASSICS RECONSIDERED

sometimes more beautifully) in these four rival versions, but it's all a little straight by comparison; the comedy is either in short supply or over-egged.

AL I agree that the later versions (including that of the re-formed D'Oyly Carte company under John Pryce Jones) don't really offer a real challenge. The singing in the Nash version is just not up to standard, and the Mackerras falls down badly with a 'Little List' that is taken terribly slowly and reduced to two verses. So I readily return to the two D'Oyly Carte recordings of the 1950s. I do feel that the three little maids in the 1957 remake are sweeter of voice and lacking that archness to which you referred earlier, but Richard Watson as Pooh-Bah in the 1950 version is another who, with his fruity pomposity, is not matched by Kenneth Sandford in the stereo remake.

JN You prefer the 1957 remake. For me, Peter Pratt makes it *hors de combat* despite the benefits elsewhere. But between the jigs and the reels we agree that it comes down to a D'Oyly Carte recording with seasoned G&S specialists under the baton of a man who was, after all, appointed Music Director by Rupert D'Oyly Carte, son of Richard the third member of the Savoy triumvirate. And I like the further direct link to the echt G&S with the 1950 recording having been made, as the Decca LP announces, 'under the direction of Bridget D'Oyly Carte', Rupert's daughter. There's a uniformity and style that no other recordings manage with such consistency.

AL Well, I do confess to having a soft spot for Peter Pratt as my very first stage Ko-Ko. However, as I have indicated, it's other factors that for me tip the balance in favour of the 1957 remake. I hope we're in agreement that the ending of the D'Oyly Carte's stage monopoly with the expiry of Gilbert's copyright in 1961 did not have the adverse effect that many feared it would. Certainly, as far as recordings are concerned, we seem to be in clear agreement that those D'Oyly Carte recordings of the 1950s, with Isidore Godfrey at the helm, remain unsurpassed by subsequent efforts as the classic audio representation of one of the classic pieces of British musical theatre. **G**

HOTOGRAPHY: AKG IMAGES

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

Works for forgotten instruments

Gavin Dixon chooses recordings of 10 works for instruments that have, over the years, fallen out of favour. But while instruments may become defunct, their music always lives on - as this intriguing selection goes to show

ome instruments are survivors, others are less lucky. For every violin, trombone or oboe design that has stood the test of time there is a vielle, orpheon or cornamuse that didn't make it. Often, though, the music of long-forgotten

instruments lives on, keeping their names alive, if also posing a range of logistical problems.

Instrumental groups tend to diversify and then rationalise. The 17th century was a time of rapid development for stringed instruments, the 19th for woodwind and brass. But all this was soon followed by a reckoning, with impractical instruments eclipsed by more efficient designs – cheaper to produce and simpler to play.

Mid-range instruments are particularly

susceptible to extinction: large oboes, small cellos, the tenor and baritone members of each family. As melody and bass instruments expand in range, each takes a share of the middle register, gradually crowding out the intermediate sizes.

So what to do with great works for forgotten instruments? Substitutions are often made. The serpents and ophicleides of Berlioz's orchestra rarely get a thought these days, so effective is the tuba in replacing them at the bottom of the brass section. The glass harmonica fascinated composers in the 18th and 19th centuries, but its increasing obscurity led to regular replacement. Donizetti himself endorsed supplanting it with a flute in Lucia di Lammermoor, but not Saint-Saëns, who expected its ethereal tones where we now usually hear a glockenspiel.

But forgotten does not mean gone. In these historically aware times, when period performance commands much of the repertoire, instrument makers and performers have taken renewed interest in the also-rans – those left behind by the evolutionary process. The recordings here are products of that movement, and of a desire to hear beyond the compromises of rearrangement and substitution. Each is a window on to the past, as well as a valuable addition to the diversity of our musical ecosystem.



The glass harmonica was invented by Benjamin Franklin in 1761 and attracted such composers as Mozart and Beethoven



Taneyev Trio for violin, viola and tenor viola, Op 31 Eric Höbarth vn Predrag Katanic va Thomas Riebl ten va

Uni Mozarteum © UNIMOZ48

Tenor violins and violas developed in the 17th century to fill the range between viola and cello. By the time Taneyev wrote this string trio (1910-11), the tenor viola was a real rarity, and the work has since relied on cello arrangements of the lower part. In 2011 Thomas Riebl recorded the work on a tenor viola, whose light, nimble tone restores the delicate interplay within the ensemble.



Studies in Canonic Form for pedal piano, Op 56 Martin Schmeding pedal pf ARS Produktion (F) ARS38 O11

Originally it was a practice instrument for organists to perfect their footwork, but by the mid-19th century the pedal piano had developed a life of its own. In 1843, Louis Schone constructed one for Schumann, whose enthusiasm for it led to a series of contrapuntal works. These were adopted by organists when the pedal piano fell from favour, but have recently been restored to the intended instrument by a number of adventurous pianists.



Oncertos for viola d'amore Europa Galante / Fabio Biondi va d'amore Virgin Classics M 395146-2 (11/07)

The viola d'amore has a distinctively mellow tone, resulting from sympathetic strings that run beneath the bridge in parallel to the playing strings. Although the viola d'amore was already disappearing in Vivaldi's era, he himself was a virtuoso, and he taught the instrument to his brightest pupils. Vivaldi's six surviving viola d'amore concertos explore the full extent of the instrument's character – in music that ranges from elegant *adagio* melodies to rustic folk dances.



... 1 Mozart

Adagio and Rondo for glass harmonica, flute, oboe, viola and cello, K617

Thomas Bloch glass harm

Naxos (B) 8 555295

The glass harmonica consists of concentric glass bowls arranged on a rotating spindle. Its ethereal, ghostly tone is produced by lightly touching the rims. Invented by Benjamin Franklin in 1761, it became popular across Europe and attracted players as august as Marie Antoinette and composers such as Mozart and Beethoven. Mozart's works were written for the blind glass harmonica virtuoso Marianne Kirchgässner.



■ 6 *Bach* ■ Solo Cello Suite No 6, BWV1012

Anner Bylsma vc piccolo Sony Classical Vivarte (F) ② S2K48O47 (1/93)

Bach's Solo Cello Suite No 6 is a conundrum. Written for an instrument with five strings that was probably smaller than a modern cello, it was long thought to have been for the viola pomposa (once said to have been invented by Bach himself). But the violoncello piccolo, used here by Anner Bylsma, is now considered a more likely candidate. The debate continues, and other recordings present the work on a range of small cellos and large violas.



5 Haydn Concerto in E flat for keyed trumpet Reinhold Friedrich keyed tpt

Vienna Academy / Haselböck

Capriccio © 10 598

In 1800, trumpeter Anton Weidinger presented his keyed trumpet with a concerto commissioned from Haydn. Many other Viennese composers later wrote concertos for him. Although popular for a while, the instrument was superseded in the mid-19th century by the modern valved trumpet. And, unfortunately for Weidinger's design, the music that had been written for the keyed trumpet proved equally well suited to its valved successor.



4 Hindemith

Des kleinen Elektromusikers Lieblinge (Seven Pieces for Three Trautoniums)

Oskar Sala trautonium

Erdenklang (F) 81032

Hindemith played a central role in the development of the trautonium, a 1930s electronic instrument similar to the theremin. It was invented by Friedrich Trautwein and developed by Oskar Sala, who persuaded Hindemith, his teacher, to write this set of pieces for the unveiling. Hindemith learnt to play the trautonium, but Sala became its only virtuoso. He later used it to produce the sound effects for Hitchcock's *The Birds*.



1 Haydn Baryton Trios

Balázs Kakuk baryton Péter Lukács va Tibor Párkányi vc Hungaraton © HCD31174

In 1765, Prince Nikolaus Esterházy took up a new hobby: he began playing the baryton, a viol-like instrument with a second set of strings plucked through a hole in the neck. Nikolaus instructed his court composer, Haydn, to provide music. Haydn produced more than 200 baryton works, the majority being trios with viola and cello. Eventually, around 1775, the prince's interest waned as he acquired a new passion, opera – and so began the next chapter in Haydn's career.



2 Telemann

Concertos for oboe d'amore - in A major; in G major Il Fondamento /

Paul Dombrecht ob d'amore

Passacaille (F) PAS901 (2/96)

The mezzo of its family, sitting midway between the oboe and the cor anglais, the oboe d'amore developed in the early 18th century and had its heyday in the last decades of the German Baroque. Bach and Telemann wrote for it as both a solo and an orchestral instrument (a famous example is the 'Qui sedes' of Bach's Mass in B minor). These concertos bring out its lighter side, engaging its graceful tone in continuously inventive melodies.





Schubert Arpeggione Sonata, D821

Nicolas Deletaille *arpeggione* Paul Badura-Skoda *pf* Fuga Libera © FUG529

This great sonata was orphaned almost from birth. The arpeggione, tuned and fretted like a guitar but positioned and bowed like a cello, was invented in 1823, and Schubert's piece was composed the following year. Within a decade the instrument had almost completely disappeared. The sonata was later co-opted for the cello or the guitar - both requiring significant compromises. The recent arpeggione revival has been a battle

against the odds, necessitating modern copies of the few surviving instruments, played by cellists who have had to master a completely new technique. And all for the sake of a single work.

To explore recordings from Gavin Dixon's Specialist's Guide, courtesy of Qobuz, please visit gramophone.co.uk/specialistsguide



PHOTOGRAPHY: CARL NIELSEN MUSEUM/ODENSE CITY MUSEUMS

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Who are the heroes of Nielsen's Eroica'?

Full of mystery and seeming contradiction, **Nielsen's Third Symphony** can be difficult to fathom and offers ample room for interpretation – resulting, as **David Patrick Stearns** finds, in a wide range of readings

Ithough once the most popular of Carl Nielsen's six symphonies, the *Sinfonia espansiva* (his Third) is now more of a curiosity, quite overshadowed by the Fourth and Fifth symphonies. But for all its absence in the concert hall, it remains the object of passionate advocacy in recordings.

Practicality works against the symphony's necessity to hire two vocal soloists for the wordless vocalises heard only in the second movement. More subtly daunting is the fact that, more than in any other Nielsen symphony, each movement is a separate sound world – one reason why performances don't always connect with all four. Overall, the composer's idiom is elusive, owing to the lack of antecedents or descendants as a point of reference. 'Nielsen was neither a classicist nor a modernist, neither reactionary nor an avant-gardist,' wrote Danish composer/ theorist Povl Hamburger. 'He had certain features derived from all, but he was and remained himself' - whatever 'himself' was.

Conductors from Leopold Stokowski to Osmo Vänskä have admitted that Nielsen requires them to apply their interpretative intuition to music they don't fully fathom – at least in the more enigmatic Symphony No 6. You could assume that the Third Symphony's title refers to the endless Nordic landscapes suggested by the second movement; in fact, *Sinfonia espansiva* takes its name from the burgeoning imagination that Nielsen is said to have felt while writing it, and part of that originality

comes from moments when musical events aren't sequenced in any conventional manner, partly because the structure isn't based on the usual tonic/dominant axis, but often progresses in a series of stepwise terraces. And while much of the first movement seems inspired by natural phenomena, a seemingly indoor waltz somehow lands in the middle. What does this mean?

EXTREMES OF INTERPRETATION

The interpretative leeway for both interpreters and listeners is immense. The irregular sputtering chords of the first movement are often described as lightning bolts, though to these ears they're an electric current coming to life. With Leonard Bernstein, the chords are a furious sword that slashes its way into the unknown. Leon Botstein has chaos coalescing into order. Myung-Whun Chung's recording feels like industrial machinery chugging to life – and aiming to change the world.

The placid second movement might be a watery tour of the ice floes where one encounters two other-worldly beings – the baritone and soprano placed in the rear of the orchestra – who vocalise like benign sirens. Or, as in Erik Tuxen's more forward-placed singers, are they tour guides to eternity? Sir Colin Davis's vocalists sound like lost hikers. The singers themselves range from Michael Schønwandt's Inger Dam-Jensen, who has the amplitude of *Götterdämmerung*'s Norns,

and Botstein's lighter-voiced Yulia Van Doren, who hails from the early-music world. Sakari Oramo's Anu Komsi brings with her a rich modern-music sensibility.

The third movement is the least successful of the four, beginning with a brass entrance that's full of crisis and concluding with enigmatic flutes that look ahead to new 'espansiva' territory. The effectiveness of these musical bookends often dictates whether the music in-between seems pedestrian or an expression of torment that's more inward than the rest of the symphony. The final movement acts like a patriotic anthem that becomes a series of variations, though not strictly thematic ones. They're more cinematic, showing cross-sections of the composer's life, including dips into minor keys that contradict Nielsen's nice-guy stereotype. Sometimes the movement goes the pace of a march (Tuxen), but it can also slow down to an Elgarian procession (Alan Gilbert).

The interpretative extremes are thrilling with swift, craggy Bernstein; confounding with slow, Furtwänglerian Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, who makes the music fray around the edges and leaves the piece struggling to sustain itself. The latter is the one out-and-out failure of the Nielsen Third discography. Historic recordings are of surprisingly limited value, but the 10 minutes of 1931 excerpts under Launy Grøndahl, caught live in excellent sound and heard on the 'Great Singers and Musicians in Copenhagen' collection (Danacord), offer a glimpse of a more popular period in the symphony's history. The performance has little of the cognitive distance between notes and meaning often encountered in later recordings, with all disparate elements working together like a dinner-table conversation that's consistently absorbing but not always amicable.

Tor Mann had important first-hand encounters with the composer (as did Grøndahl) – but can one really tell, when the sound quality blurs the geologic layers of the dense orchestration? Less opaque but in still-challenging sound quality is Erik Tuxen's 1949 recording, exuding a kind of nationalistic nobility that tells you how important the music is. The best-sounding historic recording is the Dutton-label transfer of the 1955 Danish State Radio Symphony, under John Frandsen, who is among the last to claim personal contact with the composer, though his performance remains respectfully curatorial rather than taking chances on what it all means.

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A retouched photo of Nielsen at the piano during the period he was composing his Third Symphony, with the customary pencil between his lips removed

A CHANGE OF TACK

By 1960, Nielsen's Third emerges with a more consistently accurate sound picture and a generally high standard of performance, perhaps because it is such a *rara avis* and thus isn't taken on lightly. For whatever reason, though, Symphony No 3 has yet to be recorded by any of the great orchestras of Berlin, Vienna and Amsterdam, and was only recently recorded in America by the New York Philharmonic. But that's OK. When the Berlin Philharmonic played the symphony under the usually authoritative Gilbert in November 2014, the players seemed to be speaking a third language (you could almost hear them thinking, 'Was ist *das*?'). Though perhaps a bit less glamorous,

native Danish orchestras, by contrast, make a special case for their countryman, finding that one rogue note in a Nielsen melody or harmony that highlights the composer's personality while also bringing meaning to details that with other orchestras are merely decorative.

That's why sound engineering is so important. The music's spatial qualities

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Thomas Dausgaard on DVD: 'a must for those learning the Third Symphony's mechanics'

are so flattened out in Sir Colin Davis's unexpected late-in-life Nielsen cycle with the London Symphony Orchestra that the performance's numerous balancing and phrasing touches that show a formidable musical mind at work fail to reveal what they all add up to in a tighter sound picture. Conversely, ultra-solid Paavo Berglund's 1989 recording ranks particularly high if only because of its ultra-transparent engineering that so clearly sets off the conductor's lighter touch with the symphony, making it one of the easier recordings to digest. The thoroughly up-to-date SACD engineering of BIS's Oramo recording shows why orchestral musicians tend to complain that Nielsen makes them sweat over details that the audience doesn't hear: the third-movement textures that can often be so opaque here reveal layers of developing thematic fragments, and thus more substance than normally meets the ear.

The DVD by the Danish National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Thomas Dausgaard is almost a must for those learning the symphony's mechanics. During an excellent, if not particularly distinctive, performance, the cameras stick to the score like glue in an

VOCAL CHOICE

Gothenburg SO / N Järvi DG (S) (3) (D+ 477 5514GTR3)

Although Järvi isn't one to probe the symphony down to its existential core, he certainly knows



it inside out, and has recording engineers who aid him in revealing that, and vocal soloists (Soile Isokoski and Jorma Hynninen) with opera-size personalities.

outstanding instance of how video can reveal a symphony's interior genius.

Two live recordings by **Thomas Jensen** and Jascha Horenstein have good-enoughfor-Nielsen sound quality and naturally have magnetic live-performance energy, Jensen's final movement being unforgettable and Horenstein enlivening Nielsen with his typically feverish energy.

The majority of the Nielsen Third recordings inhabit a healthy middle ground: reasonably satisfying, not going terribly far in any one direction and giving a good if somewhat provisional view of the work. This category is occupied by Adrian Leaper, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Theodore Kuchar, Michael Schønwandt and, somewhat surprisingly, Osmo Vänskä, who would probably give a more insightful performance of the piece today, whereas during his tenure with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (1996-2002) he was more inclined to let listeners make up their own minds.

MEMORABLE MOVEMENTS

Certain recordings command attention because of their extraordinary connection with one of the movements. Saraste has welcome flashes of fury in the third movement. Esa-Pekka Salonen's 1989

QUASI-OPERATIC CHOICE

Odense SO / Serov Kontrapunkt (F) 32203

This set doesn't have the most secure orchestra but it has a risk-taking energy and



a sense that Nielsen's boldly etched musical ideas are operatic characters on a stage in a four-part drama with complex relationships and unusual stories to tell.

recording with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra (one of the happiest associations of his early career) has a second movement boldly reimagined in Sibelian terms, showing how much more expression the symphony can yield with thoughtful attention to sonority as an expressive entity. Myung-Whun Chung is a bit more green than Salonen in his 1985 Gothenburg recording, but few conductors make the third movement (starting with the aforementioned brass entrance) seem so dire. Leon Botstein hasn't the most polished execution with the American Symphony Orchestra, but a strong sense of expressive inference is heard at every turn, with soprano soloist Van Doren singing with a wonderful clarity and ease of vocalism. Sixten Ehrling captures much of Tuxen's nobility in more modern sound and has a distinctive third-movement brass entrance that's all the more penetrating for its softness, though his disc (live from the Kennedy Center, Washington DC) can be awfully hard to find. The new Sakari Oramo recording has a second-movement masterstroke: soprano Komsi is placed at a more distant recording perspective than baritone Karl-Magnus Fredriksson, opening up a new world of poetic possibilities. Is the soprano some otherworldly creature beckoning him deeper into the wilderness - is she an alter ego? Other recordings have toyed with this effect, but none is this effective. In the final movement Oramo goes on to build phrases so effectively with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra - it's only his inand-out-of-focus first movement that keeps his recording from being a top contender.

Bryden Thomson presents a surprisingly non-committal first movement, but the fact that the rest of the recording is so dedicated to revealing Nielsen's specific character makes Thomson one of the few conductors to avoid the hindsight anachronisms often imposed on the music. Yes, those Kurt Weill-ish dissonances of the third movement and the Hindemith-style counterpoint of the finale are pure Nielsen, since the 1911 symphony predates both. The

EXTREME CHOICE

Royal Danish Orchestra / Bernstein Sony Classical (\$\)\$ (60 discs) 88697 68365-2 After listening you may end up feeling as



hear this every day - but his bold interpretative imagination creates a performance unlike any other. See also the YouTube video made around the same time.

104 GRAMOPHONE MARCH 2015 gramophone.co.uk Das Rheingold brass in the second movement are a legitimate outside reference, but even that is downplayed by Thomson. Letting Nielsen be Nielsen takes many forms, with the wide-roaming music usually allowed off its leash without the worry that it will fall into incoherence. Ole Schmidt tests the symphony by going beyond the bounds of good taste with a lot of sonorities that seem brash for their own sake, not to mention the oompah street-band flavour he gives to the first-movement waltz section.

The polar opposite is found in Herbert Blomstedt, who recorded the Nielsen Third twice. Robert Simpson writes in his 1952 book Carl Nielsen: Symphonist: 'One can imagine what a nightmarish problem Nielsen would've posed to a theorist like Schenker, with his static conception of musical form.' Ever-contrarian Blomstedt seems to be saying, 'Try me!' His sense of pacing, tension and release all point to finding traditional sonata form outlines in the first movement. Everywhere in the symphony, the slightest whisper of thematic continuity is highlighted with meticulous clarity. Blomstedt can be quite convincing at times; however, his zeal to organise Nielsen robs the music of its mystery, especially in the San Francisco version, even though there's no reason why the two qualities should be mutually exclusive. Of his two recordings, San Francisco has great heat and marvellous sound; I prefer his earlier Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra recording, however - if only because the occasional untidiness offsets Blomstedt's sense of order, and because, in general, it has long musical paragraphs built with a more strategically coloured dramatic arc.

In the **Douglas Bostock** recording, one wouldn't think that rhythmic precision and vitality would make such a difference, but the headlong momentum of this performance is indeed infectious. Also, whenever there's a tempo change, one strongly feels it and how it colours the music. In the first movement, glints of terror are in the accelerandos. The slower but still insistent manner of the second movement actually heightens the music's mystery. Sonorities are lean and compact. The singers feel unusually distant and light voiced, and - with their placement in the recording's sound picture – are some of the most effective on disc.

CHARACTERISATION

Emerging from Blomstedt's cul-de-sac with a clearer idea of the symphony's core personality, I eventually made my top four choices on the basis of how differently that character can be projected



Performance on a grand scale: everything about Bernstein's interpretation is big and bold

– in Edward Serov's operatic drama, in Neeme Järvi's vocal soloists, in Leonard Bernstein's audacious grandeur and in Alan Gilbert's way of speaking volumes through sonority. The fact that **Leonard Bernstein** never went back to Nielsen in his later DG years perhaps says that he'd gone as far as he could, at least in Symphony No 3 as recorded with the Royal Danish Orchestra.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE/	ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1948	Royal Stockholm PO / Mann	Danacord (§) (4) DACOCD627/30 (11/05)
1949	Danish St RSO / Tuxen	Naxos (\$) → 9 80539 (7/49°)
1955	Danish St RSO / Frandsen	Dutton (S) CDBP9796; Guild (S) GHCD2340 (4/09)
1959	Danish RSO / Jensen	Danacord (§) (3) DACOCD351/3 (4/95)
1965	Royal Danish Orch / Bernstein	Sony Classical (§) (60 discs) 88697 68365-2 (1/91 ^R)
1970	BBC Northern SO / Horenstein	BBC Legends (F) BBCL4249-2 (5/09)
1973	Danish RSO / Blomstedt	EMI (\$) (3) 500829-2 (3/01 ^R)
1973	LSO / Schmidt	Alto (§) (3) ALC2505 (1/75 ^R , 2/81 ^R , 7/87 ^R)
1984	Danish Nat Orch / Ehrling	Audiofon © CD72025
1985	Gothenburg SO / Chung	BIS (Ē) BIS-CD321 (8/86); (M) (4) BIS-CD614/6
1989	Royal Danish Orch / Berglund	RCA (F) (3) 74321 20290-2 (8/95)
1989	San Francisco SO / Blomstedt	Decca (\$) (2) 460 985-2DF2 (8/90°); (\$) (5) 478 6787DC15
1989	Swedish RSO / Salonen	Sony Classical © SK46500 (10/91 - nla)
1991	Gothenburg SO / N Järvi	DG (S) (3) → 477 5514GTR3 (12/93 ^R)
1991	RSNO / Thomson	Chandos M → CHAN9067 (2/93)
1994	Ireland Nat SO / Leaper	Naxos ® 8 550825 (11/95)
1994	Royal Stockholm PO / Rozhdestvensky	Chandos (§) (3) CHAN10271 (11/98 ^R)
1994/95	Odense SO / Serov	Kontrapunkt (🖺 32203 (11/95)
1999	Finnish RSO / Saraste	Warner Classics (Ē) 2564 60432-2
1999	Danish Nat SO / Schønwandt	Dacapo M → 8 224216 (12/99); Naxos B 8 570738;
		Dacapo (Ē) ③ 🙅 2 110403/5 (9/06)
2000	RLPO / Bostock	Documents (M) → 298341 (11/00 ^R)
2002	BBC Scottish SO / Vänskä	BIS € BIS-CD1209 (2/03); № ③ BIS-CD1839/40
2005	Janáček PO / Kuchar	Brilliant (§) (3) 94419
2009	Danish Nat SO / Dausgaard	C Major (E) 2 🙅 710508; (E) 😂 710604 (9/12)
2011	American SO / Botstein	American Symphony Orchestra ® → (no cat no)
2011	LSO / C Davis	LSO Live (M)
2012	New York PO / Gilbert	Dacapo (F) 6 220623 (12/12)
2013/14	Royal Stockholm PO / Oramo	BIS (M) _ BIS2048 (3/15)



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Master of flexibility: Alan Gilbert and his New York PO frame Nielsen's melodies with touches of rubato and all manner of nearby harmonies

Nielsen is not only writ large but also writ in red neon. Everything about the performance is bigger than the others – the contrasts, the *rallentandos* and the relentless vigour. No grace note is too small to be piercing. No motif is too small to be given a heightened inflection. How does Bernstein avoid Schmidt's vulgarity? He's simply amplifying what's in the score. The soloists are good, the final tempo is slowish in ways that make the music feel even more eventful, and sometimes the music sounds almost confessional.

Although Neeme Järvi has long been an important recording presence, this performance stands above the others as a potential classic. It has all the intelligence and taste of the middle-of-the-road types such as Saraste and Schønwandt, but with more sonic glamour from the Gothenburg strings, and more than just vocal glamour from the singers. Soile Isokoski and Jorma Hynninen are two of the bigger international stars to make the second-movement cameo appearance, but are also accomplished recitalists and thus know how to make their voices speak in detail within miniaturist confines. The vocalises emerge as if referring to a secret text, adding another intriguing layer to the music.

Edward Serov almost feels dangerous. Some of his Nielsen recordings list only

a single recording date, suggesting they're made on the fly, perhaps even live in the studio. From his unusually emphatic treatment of the opening chords, you know that his Nielsen is going to rock and roll - and it does, though not always wisely. Serov rides into thickets of fugal writing as if his Odense forces have all the horsepower in the world, though the execution does become a bit tentative. His forces don't always seem to give him all the weight, hairpin changes and three-dimensional physicality that he's after. But more than in most recordings of this symphony, there's a sense of imperative in the way each phrase follows the other - and that's deeply important. Although his forwardplaced vocal soloists don't have as much character as I'd like, the incidental instrumental solos all have a strong sense of individual expression.

With Alan Gilbert, the symphony's dinner-table conversation of the first movement is a bit more polite but there's so much more care given to the quality of the sound. Fugal passages are played without audible fear. Woodwind solos are sharper. The trombones accomplish with nuanced phrasing what Serov does with brute strength. Islands of chamber music appear here and there within movements, though the New York Philharmonic's

weighty sonority (extraordinarily well recorded) is put to great use, giving extra visceral impact to the second movement and much-needed rhetorical significance to the third movement. Sonorities that can seem opaque in some recordings have a way of revealing themselves with an evolving iridescence. I love the way that Gilbert frames his melodies with touches of rubato and all manner of nearby harmonies - particularly important in the final movement when the thematic content can wear out its welcome, especially with stately tempos. Gilbert is Serov's nicer twin - with many of the same observations but a more genteel way of saying them. This is a recording that repays close and repeated hearings perhaps the highest compliment of all. @

TOP CHOICE

New York Philharmonic / **Gilbert** Dacapo (F) 6 220623

This recording has just about everything that all the better Nielsen recordings have, but



with an extra-thoughtful use of orchestral colour - something that could perhaps only be accomplished by musicians from a world-class orchestra.

gramophone.co.uk GRAMOPHONE MARCH 2015 107

PLAYLISTS

Explore music via our themed listening suggestions – and why not create your own too?

he sea in music, composers who settled in the UK and made a huge impact on our musical life, and the roots of Hungarian music – these are the three playlists we offer this month. Andrew Achenbach offers a collection of music inspired by the sea, and James Jolly welcomes those musical immigrants to our shores. Barnabás Kelemen, meanwhile – winner of a *Gramophone* Award in 2013 for his stunning Hungaroton disc of Bartók violin sonatas – suggests 10 recordings that will hugely expand your knowledge of the roots of music in his native country.

Why not have a go yourself and make your own playlist? The one that appeals most to us will win a year's subscription to Qobuz, worth more than £140. For more information visit the playlist page on our website: gramophone.co.uk/playlists





Andrew Achenbach is inspired by the everchanging personality of the sea

What are your all-time maritime classics? My own shortlist would certainly include Mendelssohn's *The Hebrides*, Delius's *Sea Drift*, Sibelius's *The Oceanides*, Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony*, Elgar's *Sea Pictures*, Korngold's *The Sea Hawk*, Britten's *Four Sea Interludes*, Ravel's *Une barque sur l'océan* and, arguably the greatest of them all, Debussy's *La mer*.

If ever there were music which instantly conjures up a view of the ocean from the cliff tops, it's the opening of Bax's *Tintagel* (1919) – for me it's one of the most unforgettable, 'take you there' inspirations in all music. The Atlantic also makes its presence felt in Bax's Fourth Symphony, as it does in another, very different British symphony, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies's First; completed in 1978 on the Orkney island of Hoy, it was his first orchestral work to be 'permeated by the presence of the sea and the landscape of this isolated place off the north coast of Scotland'.

The teenage Britten was famously 'knocked sideways' when he first heard Bridge's *The Sea* (1911) – such melodic fecundity and lump-in-the-throat emotion! Personally, I've always sensed the Baltic's elemental power in Aulis Sallinen's superb Third Symphony from 1975. There's some



The tempestuous nature of the sea is evoked in Johan Christian Clausen Dahl's (1788-1857) 'Stormy Sea'

tremendous sea music, too, in Alfvén's epic Fourth Symphony of 1919 (From the Outermost Skerries), Paul Gilson's symphonic suite La mer (1892), Novák's The Storm (1910), Philip Sainton's masterly score for John Huston's legendary 1956 big-screen adaptation of Moby Dick, and Stanford's stirring Songs of the Sea and Songs of the Fleet.

Let's finish, though, with John Blackwood McEwen: born in Hawick, he eventually made his home on Cap Ferret in the south of France, which is where he penned, in 1913, his bracingly evocative Sixth String Quartet (*Biscay*). If you like what you hear, you're in luck: the Scot left no fewer than 19 string quartets...

- Mendelssohn Hebrides Overture, 'Fingal's Cave' Philharmonia / Otto Klemperer EMI/Warner
- Bax Tintagel
 LSO / Sir John Barbirolli

 EMI/Warner
- Maxwell Davies Symphony No 1 Presto Philharmonia / Sir Simon Rattle Decca
- **Bridge** The Sea Storm BBC NOW / Richard Hickox Chandos
- Sallinen Symphony No 3 -Vivace/Giocoso - Finale Finnish RSO / Okko Kamu BIS

- Alfvén Symphony No 4
 Soloists; Stockholm PO / Stig Westerberg

 Bluebell
- Gilson De Zee Storm
 BRTN PO / Karl-Anton Rickenbacher

 Discover International
- Sainton Moby Dick
 Moscow SO / William T Stromberg
 Marco Polo
- Stanford Songs of the Fleet -Sailing at Dawn
 Gerald Finley bar BBC NOW / Richard Hickox

Chandos

 McEwen String Quartet No 6, 'Biscay' Chilingirian Qt Chandos

Musical immigrants

James Jolly chooses 10 pieces by composers who settled in the UK

Without composers settling in the UK over the centuries, our musical landscape would look very different. How ironic, then, that the composer who created the musical language of British pageantry and celebration should be a German: George Frideric Handel. His *Zadok the Priest*, heard at the Coronation of a German-born king, remains one of the most powerful ceremonial works ever written. A pupil of Handel's exact contemporary JS Bach, Carl Friedrich Abel settled in London and

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stayed – his viola da gamba suites are well worth exploring. One of JSB's sons, Johann Christian, also came to London where he was known as the 'London' or 'English Bach'. Muzio Clementi was brought to England as the protégé of Sir Thomas Beckford - he went on to become a major figure (as both pianist and composer) in English musical life.

In the 20th century, the Nazis ensured that a huge number of (mainly Jewish) artists fled Germany and the 'annexed' countries, and Britain's musical life benefited from the presence of some major musical voices: people like Hans Gál, Berthold Golschmidt, Egon Wellesz and Franz Reizenstein. Their musical language is powerful, and nearly always tonal - and well worth sampling. The Reizenstein Second Piano Concerto, in a late-Romantic style is really appealing. The Communist take-over in Poland forced Andrzej Panufnik out and he settled in London: his Polonia Suite is a powerful hymn to his homeland. Roberto Gerhard fled Spain after Franco came to power: though his music is often highly atonal, his Violin Concerto is an intense and really most approachable work.

- Abel Viola da gamba Suite in D minor Paolo Pandolfo va da gamba Glossa
- Handel Zadok the Priest
 Westminster Abbey Choir;
 The English Concert / Simon Preston
 Archiv Produktion
- JC Bach Symphony in E flat, Op 6 No 2 Akademie für Alte Musik, Berlin Harmonia Mundi
- Clementi Sonata in E flat, Op 12 No 2 Vladimir Horowitz pf Sony Classical
- Gál Symphony No 2
 Orchestra of the Swann / Kenneth Woods
 Avie
- Goldschmidt Ciaconna Sinfonica
 CBSO / Sir Simon Rattle
 Decca



Composers settling in the UK changed its landscape

- Wellesz Sonata for Solo Cello Anna Sawicka vc
 - **Chamber Sound**
- Reizenstein Piano Concerto No 2
 Victor Sangiorgio pf RSNO / Martin Yates
 Dutton
- Panufnik Polonia Suite
 Polish RSO / Lukasz Borowicz

 Sony Classical
- Gerhard Violin Concerto
 Olivier Charlier vn BBC SO /
 Mathias Bamert
 Chandos

Hungarian music

The Gramophone Award-winning violinist Barnabás Kelemen traces the evolution of modern Hungarian music

I'm proud to select 10 different and yet very typical tracks of Hungarian music or, better put, music from the land of Hungary. You will hear the ancient roots of Hungarian folk tunes in composer Márta Sebestyén's folk-band arrangements by the Muzsikás Ensemble, and also in tracks from the wonderful singer Beáta Palya. Evolving from this we hear the first movement of Bartók's powerful Piano Sonata performed by Zoltán Kocsis, and Kodály's evocative Dances from Galánta performed by Iván Fischer's Budapest Festival Orchestra. We cannot forget the hugely important Hungarian Gypsies (like my grandfather, Pali Pertis) who have arguably been the most musical people in Hungary. They were fundamentally inspired by our language and at the same time by neighbouring nations such as Romania or Serbia. This takes us to the amazing violinist Roby Lakatos and his fantastic Gypsy band and the crazy Gypsy Balkan band Besh O Drom, as well as Cziffra playing Liszt's Gypsy-inspired Grand Galop. And we mustn't forget the present - I might argue that György Ligeti and György Kurtág are among the best composers of our time. I hope that after listening to this playlist you will see the amazing line that connects the traditions of folk music right up to the Györgys of today.

- Sebestyén Gyönyörü Marta Sebestyén sngr Gryllus
- Traditional Hidegen Fújnak A Szelek Muzsikás
 - **Etnofon Records**
- Traditional (arr Palya)
 As én piros Vérum (élö felvétel)
 Beáta Palya sngr
 Sony Music Entertainment



Barnabás Kelemen: proud of his Hungarian heritage

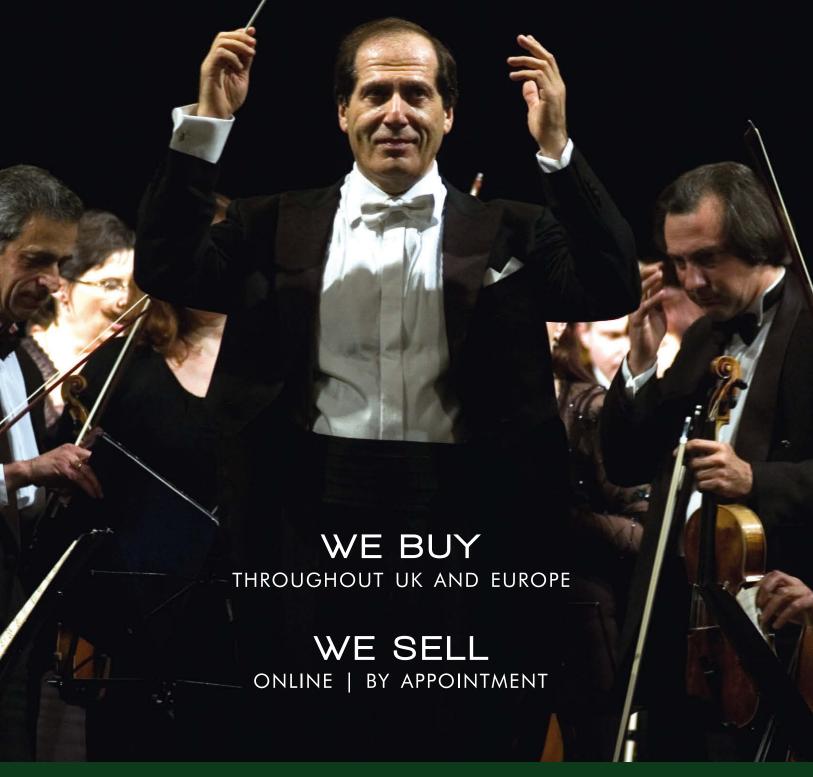
- Bartók Piano Sonata Allegro moderato Zoltán Kocsis pf
 - **Philips**
- Kodály Dances of Galánta
 Budapest Festival Orchestra /
 Iván Fischer
 Philips
- Dinicu L'Alouette
 Roby Lakatos vn
 DG
- Barcza, Pettik & Sidoo Meggyújtom A Pipám Besh O Drom NarRator Records
- **Liszt** Grand Galop Georges Cziffra *pf* Parlophone
- Ligeti Violin Concerto -Aria - Hoquet - Chorale Benjamin Schmid vn Finnish RSO / Hannu Lintu Ondine
- Kurtág Játétok, Book 4: Hommage à Soproni
 György Kurtág, Márta Kurtág pfs
 SWRmusic

qobuz

Why not contribute a playlist? To do so, visit qobuz.com and explore

the available recordings. Once you've created your playlist of 10 recordings, simply send a link with an introductory paragraph and 'playlist' in the subject line to gramophone@markallengroup. com. If we choose your playlist for publication, you'll receive a year's free subscription to Qobuz! See gramophone.co.uk/playlists for more details, and terms and conditions

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WATSON R E C O R D S

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Michael Tilson Thomas's 70th birthday gala with the LSO, Beethoven in Berlin from Bernard Haitink and Isabelle Faust, and Sir András Schiff's solo recital at Carnegie Hall

Berlin Philharmonie & Digital Concert Hall

A Beethoven evening with Bernard Haitink and Isabelle Faust, March 6

Isabelle Faust won the *Gramophone*Concerto Award in 2012 for her recording of the Beethoven and Berg violin concertos with Orchestra Mozart and Claudio Abbado. For this concert, Faust is joined by Bernard Haitink and the Berlin Philharmonic who, in the second half, will perform Beethoven's Symphony No 6, the *Pastoral*. Haitink has recorded highly regarded Beethoven symphony cycles with the LSO, LPO and Concertgebouw Orchestra. The concert will be broadcast live via the Berlin Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall and will then be archived for your subsequent listening pleasure.

berliner-philharmoniker.de

Vienna State Opera & streamed to your Smart TV or computer

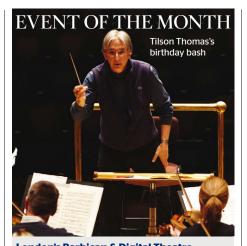
Halévy, Bellini, Massenet and Verdi live from Vienna, March 7, 10, 13, 21 & 28

March's live-streamed operas from Vienna State Opera start with Halévy's rarely encountered La Juive (March 7) featuring Decca's latest signing. Aida Garifullina (see page 8) alongside Neil Shicoff; Frédéric Chaslin conducts. Marco Armiliato conducts Bellini's I puritani (with Jongmin Park and Olga Peretyatko) on March 10. Ramón Vargas takes the title-role, opposite Angela Gheorghiu, in Massenet's Werther (March 13) while Marina Rebeka and Dmitri Hvorostovsky star in Verdi's La traviata. On March 28, Aida is performed under the baton of Philippe Auguin with Sondra Radvanovsky (Aida), Luciana D'Intino (Amneris), Jorge de León (Radamès) and Franco Vassallo (Amonasro). Single tickets are €14 while a Smart Live ticket, for eight operas, costs €88.

staatsoperlive.com

Cardiff's Hoddinott Hall & BBC Radio 3

The music of female composers is celebrated on International Women's Day, March 8
International Women's Day is being marked in Cardiff with a concert celebrating the music of female composers, including Augusta Holmès, Lili Boulanger and Cécile Chaminade. Jessica Cottis conducts the BBC NOW, who are joined for the evening by pianists Noriko Ogawa and Pascal and Ami Rogé. It will be broadcast live on BBC Radio 3, on which station you'll also be able to hear a concert earlier in the day, live from the BBC Radio Theatre, of music by Fanny Mendelssohn, Clara Schumann and English composer Rebecca Clarke, performed by two New Generation Artists – viola player



London's Barbican & Digital Theatre Michael Tilson Thomas's 70th Birthday Gala with the LSO, March 12 & 15

In celebration of his 70th birthday this month, the LSO's Principal Guest Conductor Michael Tilson Thomas leads a pair of concerts, both of which star pianist Yuja Wang as soloist. In the first, on March 12, Wang performs Gershwin's Piano Concerto and in the second she takes on the First Concerto by Shostakovich. The Russian composer's Fifth Symphony concludes the first programme, while Sibelius's Second brings the birthday celebrations to their conclusion. Both concerts are available to watch in full on Mezzo and Arte Concert, and on the Digital Theatre platform, which offers low-cost rentals and purchases of footage in HD, for up to three months after the concert.

Iso.co.uk; digitaltheatre.com; mezzo.tv; concert.arte.tv

Lise Berthaud and mezzo Kitty Whately (11am). **bbc.co.uk/bbcnow**; **bbc.co.uk/radio3**

New York's Carnegie Hall & WQXR

Sir András Schiff plays sonatas by Haydn,
Beethoven, Mozart and Schubert, March 10
Schiff explores late piano sonatas by four
masters of the form: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven
and Schubert. Haydn's jovial Sonata in C,
HobXVI/50, is followed by Beethoven's Sonata
No 30, Op 109, which he has recorded for
ECM New Series. In his review of that recording,
Gramophone's Jed Distler wrote: 'He plays
Op 109 directly and simply, absorbing finely
tuned details of balance, voicing and articulation
within a big picture.' Schiff continues with
Mozart's Sonata in C, K545, before concluding
with Schubert's Sonata in C minor, D958.

carnegiehall.org; wqxr.org

Conductor Rafael Payare returns to the

orchestra that propelled him to fame, March 12
As tension builds towards the triennial Malko
Competition for Young Conductors at the end
of April, the maestro who won the gong last
time round returns to the Danish National SO
to lead symphonies by Beethoven (the First)
and Dvořák (the Eighth), as well as music for
cello and orchestra by Casella and Respighi
(played by Enrico Dindo). This performance
represents Payare's first 'full' concert with the
Danish National SO – whose players took to him
so respectfully – since the last contest in 2012.

New York's Metropolitan Opera & cinemas worldwide

DiDonato and Flórez star in Rossini's La donna del lago, March 14

Donizetti's *bel canto* masterpiece enjoys its first-ever Met performances in the 2014/15 season, and is the perfect showcase for mezzo Joyce DiDonato and tenor Juan Diego Flórez. DiDonato sings the title-role of Elena, while Flórez is the king who relentlessly pursues her. The opera marks the Met debut of Scottish director Paul Curran.

metopera.org

London's Barbican & BBC Radio 3

Total Immersion: Pierre Boulez at 90, March 21
As part of the Barbican's 'Boulez at 90'
celebrations, the BBC SO presents an
'immersion' day on March 21 which includes
films, talks and concerts. The evening concert
features François-Xavier Roth conducting the
orchestra in two works by Boulez: Notations I-IV
& VII and Pli selon pli. The concert will be
broadcast live on BBC Radio 3.

barbican.org.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

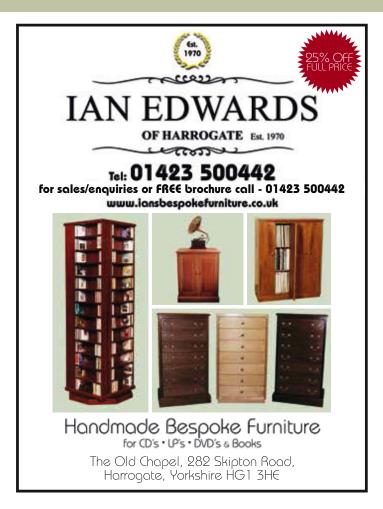
Institut Français/Kings Place & BBC Radio 3

It's All About Piano, March 27-29

For the third year running, the Institut Français and Kings Place (both in London) play host to the 'It's All About Piano' festival. From Friday March 27, major pianists will be performing and giving masterclasses. Day 1 features Mikhail Rudy, Cyprien Katsaris and John Taylor; Day 2 includes performances by François-Frédéric Guy, Peter Hill and Peter Donohoe; and Day 3 includes an appearance by Angela Hewitt. The Franco-British student concert on Saturday at 6pm will be recorded for future broadcast on Radio 3.

institut-francais.org.uk/itsallaboutpiano; bbc.co.uk/radio3













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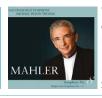
THIS MONTH the return of a famous audio name, a super-compact all-in-one music storage/streaming solution and the rise of hi-res music online.

Andrew Everard, Audio Editor

MARCH TEST DISCS



This coupling of Bartók and Tchaikovsky by Roman Simovic and the LSO String Ensemble is truly demonstration quality.



With superb sound, especially in the DSD and hi-res PCM versions, this is another fine Mahler recording from the SFS's 'house label'.



The ever-diversifying audio hardware market keeps on finding ways to reinvent itself





he Sony Walkman is back.
Reinvented as a high-resolution
player with a price tag just shy of
£1000, the new NW-ZX2 ① will
play music at up to DSD5.6 quality from its
onboard storage, has Bluetooth using the
efficient LDAC codec, integral Wi-Fi to let
it stream music from DLNA servers over a
home network, and a USB audio connection
for headphone amplifiers and DACs. It's on
sale from this spring.

LG, meanwhile, has come up with a new spin on multiroom speakers with its latest models 2: like the company's domestic appliances, they're compatible with LG's HomeChat system, enabling them to be controlled using text and voice messages via the popular Line messaging service.

Back to basics is the watchword for Onkyo, with the introduction of the UK-tuned A-9010 stereo amplifier (3), delivering 44W per channel and selling for just under £200. It's said to be the result of painstaking tuning carried out over the course of last year, and uses specially selected audiophile-grade components and a carefully considered circuit layout. Tone controls are provided along with five line inputs, and the new amplifier also has a moving-magnet phono stage.

That last feature is appropriate given that Onkyo has also launched a direct-drive

turntable, the £400 CP-1050, complete with a thick, vibration-damping MDF plinth, die-cast aluminium platter and a low-torque direct-drive motor designed to reduce low-frequency cogging noise.

Rather more exotically priced is the limited-edition Keith Monks discOvery mini One Sapphire 4, the smallest-ever model in the record cleaning machine company's 45-year history. It will be made in a run of just 45 units worldwide, selling at £1995.

Chord Electronics has launched a new 'tabletop' version of its Hugo DAC/ headphone amplifier, the £2995 Hugo TT, capable of handling file formats up to 32-bit/384kHz and DSD5.6 . It has asynchronous working on its Type-B USB input, coaxial and optical digital inputs, and AptX Bluetooth for wireless connection. It has both RCA phono and balanced XLR outputs, along with three headphone outputs – two 6.3mm and one 3.5mm – plus a remote handset for input selection and volume control.

Cambridge Audio has a complete new line-up, along with a high-end network music player, the £1200 Azur 851N **6**, for its flagship range. The London-based company's new CX series of stereo and home cinema products claims 'a unique combination of class-leading sound, advanced networking capabilities,

large colour displays and exceptional build quality and design'. Prices start at £300. The CXN network music player can handle file formats up to 24-bit/192kHz, and has wired/Wi-Fi networking, USB inputs for memory devices and a computer, conventional digital inputs, AirPlay and optional Bluetooth, and upsamples all inputs to 24-bit/384kHz before conversion using Wolfson WM8740 DACs. It can also function as a digital preamplifier.

There's also the CXC CD transport, while the CXA60 amplifier is a 60W per channel amplifier with digital and analogue inputs, and the 80Wpc CXA80 adds an asynchronous USB audio input, also found on the CXR120 and CXR200 AV receivers. The 120Wpc CXR120 has seven HDMI 2.0 inputs and two outputs, while the 200Wpc CXR200 has eight inputs and two outputs. Available in black or silver, all the new models will go on sale in the next month or two.

Finally this month, a little box designed to turn any old speaker you may have into a Bluetooth device. The Vamp 7 has been designed by London-based Paul Cocksedge, and combines a Bluetooth receiver and amplifier, all powered by a built-in rechargeable battery. Selling for £49.99 and available in red, black or white, it's available from thevamp.co.uk. 6

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REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Technics Premium C700 Series

New system from a famous name from the past - has Technics reinvented itself for today's listening world?



Inputs Line audio, moving magnet phono, 3 coaxial and one optical digital, USB-B asynchronous supporting PCM to 192kHz/32-bit and DSD2.8/5.6

Outputs One pair of speakers

Other connections System control ports, headphones

Output 45Wpc into 8ohms, 70Wpc into 4

Accessories supplied Remote handset **Dimensions** (WxHxD) 34x13.2x32.5cm

TECHNICS SB-C700

Type Two-way standmount speakers

Price £1199

Drive unit Coaxial driver combining 16cm mid/bass driver, with carbon fibre/aluminium diaphragm, and 19mm aluminium dome

Claimed frequency range 45Hz-80kHz (-10db)

Crossover frequency 2.5kHz Sensitivity 85dB/1W/1m **Impedance** 4ohms

Input power 50W, 100W maximum

Accessories supplied Speaker cables, grilles

Dimensions (WxHxD) 22x33.6x28.1cm

technics.com

TECHNICS ST-C700

Type Network music player

Price £849

Inputs/sources USB-A, asynchronous USB on Type-B socket, Bluetooth, AirPlay, FM/DAB/ DAB+, DLNA streaming

Outputs Analogue stereo, coaxial/optical digital

Other connections System control port File handling PCM/WAV/FLAC up to 192kHz/32-bit, Apple Lossless up to 96kHz/24bit, DSD2.8/5.6

Accessories supplied Remote handset, system remote and digital cables **Dimensions** (WxHxD) 34x7.8x30.5cm

TECHNICS SU-C700

Type Integrated amplifier Price £1249

ou could say it's usual to describe any new product launch – let alone the re-emergence of an entire brand - as 'eagerly anticipated', but that wasn't quite how the relaunch of Technics happened. Instead, the parent company did one of those classic 'oh, and one more thing...' moves, so beloved of the late Steve Jobs, at the 2014 IFA show in Berlin.

Up on the massive screen came a giant VU meter, followed by the Technics

logo, black drapes drew back to reveal more Technics branding. I knew what was coming: in December 2013 I'd been invited to Panasonic HO in Osaka to see and hear the very early prototypes of what was to become 'the T project'.

There are two new Technics ranges: the R1 Reference system of network player/ controller, power amplifier and massive floorstanding speakers, with an all-up price of around £37,000 – or 'that's brave' as one of my fellow journalists commented - and the C700 Premium system we have here, selling for less than a tenth of that price.

The R1 Reference system has some innovative technology, including Technics Digital Link to connect the player and amplifier with twin runs of Ethernet cable, one for each channel, and carrying data at 24-bit/384kHz. However, the C700 system is rather more conventional, comprising a network player, an integrated amplifier and a pair of standmount speakers, with a matching CD player to follow fairly soon.

The £849 ST-C700 network player not only supports DLNA streaming of music from a computer or NAS device over a home Ethernet network (there's no Wi-Fi provision), but also has both a Type-A USB input for smartphones and tablets as well as USB memory, and an asynchronous USB Type-B input for a computer.

Digital inputs are also provided on both coaxial and optical connections, and the player also has both Bluetooth and Apple AirPlay for wireless music streaming from computers and portable devices. Completing the package are DAB/DAB+ and FM radio tuners, while the 'under the lid' technology includes extensive filtering and jitter-reduction for the digital inputs, virtual battery operation to isolate the circuitry from mains-borne noise, and what Technics calls its 'Optimally Activated Circuit System': this shuts down digital modules not in use to avoid interference.

The player comes with a remote control handset able to drive all its functions as well as controlling the matching amplifier and forthcoming CD player, but you can also select and play tracks using the Technics Music App on a smartphone or tablet.

The £1249 SU-C700 amplifier certainly harks back to the design of classic Technics amps of the past. Above the big, bold VU meters sit the very prominent volume control and the source selector: the amplifier has two analogue inputs (one line and one moving magnet phono), three coaxial and

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SUGGESTED **PARTNERS**

Here are some ideas to make more of the Technics system

TECHNICS SL-C700 CD PLAYER

Due in the shops very soon, the Technics SL-C700 CD player system operation



NEXUS 6I STANDS

The SB-C700 speakers need solid support to be heard at their best: these Nexus 6i stands from Atacama will do the iob extremely well



one optical digital sockets, and asynchronous USB on a Type-B USB connector to allow the direct hook-up of a computer.

The 45W per channel amplifier uses the company's Jitter Elimination and Noise-shaping Optimisation technology, combining a clock generator to reduce low-frequency jitter and a high-precision sample rate converter for the highfrequency stuff, a version of the battery power supply used in the ST-C700, here employed to clean up the digital clock, and Load Adaptive Phase Calibration.

That last one is Technics' attempt to solve one of the major problems of amplifiers: the way they interact with the speakers with which they're used. Or rather the way different speakers make amplifiers behave. Using a series of test signals sent to the speakers, and monitored by internal circuitry in the amplifier, digital signal processing is said to be able to flatten out any problems created by the speakers amplitude and phase-frequency response, creating an ideal response.

Talking of speakers, the £1199 SB-C700 standmount loudspeakers available as part of this system are certainly striking, due to their combination of a curvaceous design aimed at reducing internal reflections and standing waves, single coaxial drive unit and white finish. Solidly constructed, with a cabinet sounding impressively 'dead' when rapped with the knuckles – always an essential hi-fi reviewer test! - the SB-C700 speakers use a 16cm mid/bass unit with a main diaphragm made from an aluminium honeycomb core wrapped in carbon cloth, at the centre of which is placed a 19mm aluminium dome tweeter, the idea being to get as close as possible to the perfect 'point source' of sound. The speakers stand just under 34cm tall, come with grilles held in place with invisible magnetic fixings, and are reflex-ported to the rear.

PERFORMANCE

Technics supplied an iPad Mini pre-loaded with a beta version of its Music App, as I was reviewing the system just before it went on sale and the app went 'live', and with this I was able to play music from my usual NAS storage rather more conveniently than I could using the remote control and the ST-C700's own display, which isn't

exactly visible across a room (though this criticism is hardly unique to the Technics).

One interesting aspect of the network streaming here is the ability to play DSD2.8 and DSD5.6 files (they can also be played via a couple of USB sockets), so with the latest version of Twonkymedia Server (which supports DSD) set up on my NAS, I was soon listening to tracks from the likes of Channel Classics, 2L, and various other labels offering DSD downloads.

To say that the Technics system sounds best when fed the best-quality music files may seem dangerously near to stating the obvious, but though the remaster option built into the player will do its best to make the most of compressed music such as MP3 files and those streamed in via Bluetooth or AirPlay, it's really only when high-quality files - ie CD-quality or better - are played through the system that it's heard at its best.

Playing Britten's Second String Quartet in DSD128, from the Engegård Quartet's 2L series, the Technics system sounds both agile and dynamic, even if a bit more conviction in the bass, and presence in the treble wouldn't go amiss. What the Technics system does so well is make music splendidly easy to enjoy, even if it's perhaps not quite the highest of fi, especially considering that fairly hefty price-tag.

What it does well is get to the heart of a recording, completely in line with the company's slogan that these new products are all about 'rediscovering music', and what failings there are – a certain dryness to the sound, and some sense of a bit too much warmth in the bass, instead of speed and control - are more limitations of the system than it actually doing anything wrong.

Yes, the same traits are noticeable when playing the San Francisco's own-label recording of Mahler's Eighth Symphony, in that the Technics system sounds slightly lacking in live presence and sheer chestthumping power, even though it will certainly go loud enough to fill reasonablysized rooms. But then the performance is still enjoyable, and I guess expecting it to sound like the full 1000 through speakers so small is perhaps asking a bit much!

This is a fundamentally well-sorted and innovative system, and shows definite promise for the new future of the Technics brand.



Naim UnitiLite

The Technics system is hard to match, not least due to the impressive flexibility of that network player, with its DLNA playback of content up to DSD128 as well as Bluetooth, AirPlay and more. It really is the star turn in this system, but if you were looking for alternatives, albeit with less wide-ranging playback capability, an all-in-one system such as the Naim UnitiLite, at just under £2000, would be a good choice. It combines CD player, network playback, DAB/DAB+/FM tuner and a 50W per channel amplifier, and has recently gained both Spotify Connect and Bluetooth capability. More details at

naimaudio.com

Neat Motive

The main option to the Technics system is, as suggested in the main review, some alternative speakers, although it's worth having a long hard listen to the SB-C700s to see whether they suit your tastes better than they did mine. If I were buying the Technics electronics I might well consider some alternatives, and especially compact floorstanding speakers such

as the Neat Motive SX2s, at around £1395: they may be a little more expensive than the Technics speakers, but they have no need of stands, and take up no more space than a pair of standmounted SB-C700s. If you're determined to stick with standmount speakers, try the same company's SX3, at around £1085: add stands, and you're still at the same kind of price as the Technics speakers. More at neat.co.uk

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REVIEW NOVAFIDELITY X12

Small but mighty

Ultra-compact ripper/streamer is a one-box computer music system - without the computer

s you may have gathered from these pages in recent times, there's no shortage of ways to connect your computer to a hi-fi system for music playback. There are add-on USB wireless systems, or a simple cable to an amplifier or receiver with asynchronous USB input capability; you can use built-in wireless systems such as Bluetooth or Apple's AirPlay to send the music over to compatible equipment; or you can store your library on a Network Attached Storage device and access it using computers, component network music players or even an all-in-one wireless speaker system controlled by an app on a smartphone or tablet.

However, there are many people who will want to keep their computer and audio systems separate, either for physical reasons – in that the computer is in one room of the house and the hi-fi in another - or simply because they don't want to have a computer in their listening room. For those users there are a few solutions on the market, not least of which is the Cocktail Audio X30 tested in these pages back in August last year, combining a simple ripper (to copy music from CD to its hard disk) with internet radio, the ability to stream music to other network devices, recording from analogue sources and a built-in amplifier to allow it to function as a standalone 'just add speakers' system.

Since that review, Kent-based Cocktail Audio parent company Sygnifi has launched a new brand, Novafidelity, and the first model bearing the name is the X12, with much of the capability of the X30 in a much smaller enclosure – it's just 18cm wide, 10cm tall and 15cm deep, so will slot in almost anywhere.

In fact, the X12 is closely based on a model previously sold as the Cocktail Audio X10, but improvements here include better audio components including an enhanced digital-to-analogue converter with support for 24-bit/192kHz content, a larger screen with an improved menu system (or 'user interface', as the jargon has it) and a control knob for simpler access, and a drawer-loading CD player/ripper in place of the older model's slot-loader. The new version also has passive cooling in place of the X10's fan, for quieter running, and banana-plug-compatible speaker outputs for the

internal 30W per channel amplifier instead of the previous springclips. Oh, and it also supports Qobuz streaming.

Prices depend on the amount of internal storage you decide you need: the X12 accepts user-swappable 3.5in, 2.5in and SSD (solid state drive) storage, and you can buy a 'bare bones' version for around £420, to which you can add your own hard drive.

Or you can buy the Novafidelity preloaded with storage: a version with 1TB of storage onboard is about £529, with prices rising to around £670 for a 4TB version. If you want one with a 1TB SSD fitted, which should give faster track access (although the models with conventional drives certainly aren't slow), that's available for £1299 – but whichever model you buy the internal storage can be augmented and backed up using external USB drives.

These can also be used to copy music from USB devices to the X12's internal hard drive, as can a direct USB Type-B connection from a computer or an additional front-panel USB for quick transfers, and there's also a network connection on an Ethernet port or using an optional wireless 'dongle', analogue audio inputs and outputs and optical and coaxial digital outputs.

PERFORMANCE

There's so much on offer in this compact unit that it's hard to know where to start, other than to say copying music onto the hard disk, whether from CD or using computer memory, is extremely simple, the database look-up finds disc and track information reliably, and the menu system is easy to navigate.

The X12 is remarkably flexible, and sounds good whether used as a source component for an existing system, using the line outputs, or connected directly to speakers. I used it into the Roth OLi RA1 standmounters, which are excellent value at just under £100, and it delivered a sound fit to challenge some of the very best microsystems on the market, but I also had good results connecting it to the superb Neat Iota speakers: they may be somewhere around the £700 mark, but they by no means disgraced the little Novafidelity system.

Connected through my main system, the X12 sounded very good indeed, delivering everything from CD-quality to 24-bit/192kHz files with plenty of



NOVAFIDELITY X12

Type All-in-one CD/hard disk/network system

Price from £420, depending on HDD capacity

Features CD player/ripper, hard disk player, internet radio, streaming music (inc Qobuz), network music server/client

Amplifier 30Wpc

Inputs Analogue audio on RCA phonos
Outputs Digital (optical/coaxial), analogue
out (RCA phonos), one pair of speakers,
headphones

Other connections 3xUSB, Ethernet, Wi-Fi (using optional 'dongle')

File handling FLAC/WAV (to 24bit/192KHz), APE/CUE, ALAC, AIFF, AAC, M4A, MP3, WMA, Ogg Vorbis, etc.

Accessories supplied Remote handset, offboard power supply, adapter tray and screws for 2.5in/SSD installation

Dimensions (WxHxD) 18x10x15cm **novafidelity.co.uk**

bass weight and detail, and showing a lovely light touch plus plenty of power and scale.

The sound has excellent focus and balance, and instruments are presented with fine timbre and tonality even in busy orchestral works, for example the highly dynamic Prologue from last year's San Francisco Symphony *West Side Story*, while choral music has both good intelligibility and a real sense of scale and dynamics.

The X12 will also act as a media server for other network players on the same network, so I was able to access it from the NaimUniti on my office desk, and it can also be controlled by third-party smartphone/tablet apps if it's a way across the room and the very clear display is a still a bit too small for you: I used the Kinsky software Linn provides for its systems, running on an iPad mini, to control playback on the little system.

Yes, the buttons on the main remote handset are a bit small, and it will take a little while before they're navigated instinctively, but beyond that this is a highly competitive system, whether used as a source or a 'just add speakers' set-up, and it's really hard to think of anything else capable of so much, and with such quality, for the money. **G**

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COLUMBIA

ESSAY

Is this the year streaming gets serious?

A new format designed to give hi-res quality without the hefty data rates, and more lossless content - is streaming about to go audiophile?





Meridian's Explorer 2 DAC (left) and DSP8000 speakers (right) are both MQA-ready

he debate about streaming music services rattles on, with continued disenchantment from some artists about the way their music is handled – not to mention how much they get paid for it – being countered by streaming providers claiming the artists are getting money they wouldn't otherwise have earned. But for serious music lovers the questions are more about the availability of music from their favourite artists or labels, and the quality at which it's available.

Catalogue availability is one matter, and swathed in the mists of music industry contracts, but the quality is a different matter. For after some time when low bit-rate MP3 files dominated the streaming arena, simply due to worries about the bandwidth users had available for such services, the increasing penetration of both high-speed broadband and enhanced mobile services such as 3G and 4G seems to be encouraging some streaming providers to push the boat out a bit.

Statistics suggest 73% of UK households now have access to some form of fast internet connection, while by the end of 2013 nearly 73% of mobile users were on 3G. Those figures are sure to have risen in the intervening period as the use of mobile devices shifts from voice to data. So lossless streaming music services are appearing, with CD quality available first from Qobuz and more recently from new arrival Tidal, which is busily rolling out its service to a wide range of consumer electronics brands, both mass-market and high-end. Tidal has even launched a website to allow consumers to explore the sound-quality differences between lossy and lossless streaming: test.tidalhifi.com allows users to toggle between the two versions of a variety of

tracks 'blind', only being informed of which version they preferred after they have made a choice.

And of late there have been hints that Spotify may be following suit. In a recent interview with music industry magazine *Billboard*, Spotify founder and CEO Daniel Ek said, 'Just like we've had deluxe editions of albums, everyone is thinking about how does that look like in a future world? Lossless music – is that a higher-priced tier? Is that something that comes with deluxe editions?'

Certainly a lossless Spotify service would give the whole streaming market a shakeup, simply due to the huge market share

'British company Meridian thinks it has the solution to our bandwidth problems: Master Quality Authenticated'

the company has: as of November 2014 it claimed 50m active users worldwide, of which a quarter were paying subscribers. Those 12.5m subscribers represented a 150% increase on the same quarter in 2013.

However, those bandwidth issues will remain if such services are going to move wholesale into CD-quality streaming, let alone beyond that into the on-demand delivery of high-resolution music files. British high-end company Meridian, which previously developed the Meridian Lossless Packing technology used for DVD-Audio and later for Dolby True HD on Blu-ray, thinks it has the solution to these bandwidth problems. Towards the end of 2014 it announced MQA, or Master Quality Authenticated, said to give 'a clear, accurate and authentic path from the

recording studio all the way to any listening environment – at home, in the car or on the go.'

MQA makes use of recent advances in neuroscience and psychoacoustics to capture the timing information Meridian founder Bob Stuart says is fundamental to the way we perceive sound, then encode music in a new way. The company says that 'Meridian's new encoding scheme, referred to as encapsulation, efficiently captures the timing of musical events that are in theory far too fast for any reasonable sample rate.' The extra detail and timing information is 'folded in' to a 24-bit, 96kHz container, in a process that Bob Stuart has described as 'audio origami'.

It does this by splitting the sound into three 'sections': most of it is captured in standard 44.1/48kHz sample rates and as few as 20 bits, then there is some requiring 88.2/96kHz, and then a small but significant part needing sample rates of 192kHz and beyond. Meridian says MQA 'captures region A conventionally. Region B is folded losslessly into the signal, but region C is captured using Meridian's unique new advanced sampling technology which can encode signals beyond the reach of conventional high-resolution sample rates. It's all encapsulated into a whole which requires no more space to store or transmit than a conventional 24-bit, 96kHz recording.'

What's more, the system uses extensive extra data buried in the music stream to certify that what's being delivered at the player end is unpacked exactly as it was encoded – i.e. just as it sounded when it left the studio – with the result that it 'allows us to deliver studio-quality audio performance at no more than a sample rate of 96kHz. Even at CD sample rates, the quality is equivalent to that of a conventional 96kHz recording.'

Meridian says the resulting files, provided they are transmitted in a lossless format, will be back-compatible with equipment lacking the MQA decoder, but has already launched a second-generation version of its Explorer USB headphone amplifier with MQA decoding, which is now on sale.

It will be worth watching what happens with MQA, and the entire streaming market, for the rest of the year. **G**

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RB - Suffolk

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Don't knock 'White Christmas' · MTT and crossover · The Gramophone lands in France

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The best Christmas song?

I attempt to persuade friends who profess to despise classical music to open their ears, to avoid dismissing out of hand music that has a different objective and which occupies a different niche to the popular music they have listened to all their lives. Similar advice, in the obverse, might be respectfully given to both Martin Cullingford and Jeremy Nicholas, who in the December issue (pages 3 and 118) each took a swipe at the genre of popular Christmas songs.

I agree that the 'infuriatingly ubiquitous' (MC's phrase) overplaying of the worst of these pop confections every year is a 'blight' (JN's word). But 'White Christmas' hardly deserves to be lumped in with the cloying 'Mistletoe and Wine'. Irving Berlin, who wrote 1500 songs, regarded it as his finest. Berlin did not set out to conceive a work of profound depth and multilayered nuances, like the best classical music. He wanted to create a standard – a song that anyone, anywhere, whatever his or her level of musical sophistication, could enjoy. He was more successful in this than he ever could have dared to hope.

David English Somerville, MA, US

MTT and the path untaken

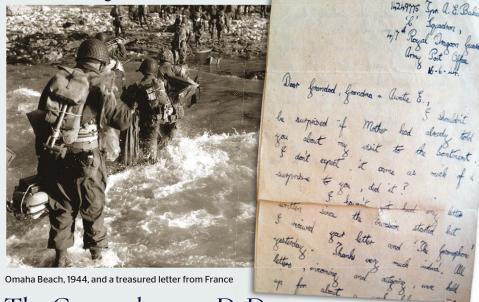
Congratulations to Michael Tilson Thomas on his 20 years with the San Francisco Symphony ('Maverick Tilson Thomas', January, page 17). Not so well known is the fact that he had a fleeting association with another orchestra of an entirely different complexion.

In 1974, the fresh-faced young maestro collaborated with John McLaughlin's



Fresh-faced: the young Michael Tilson Thomas

Letter of the Month



The Gramophone at D-Day

I thought you might be interested in a letter I have found from my father to his grandparents and aunt. He was, in everyday life, a library assistant in Bedford, going to amazing BBC concerts in the Bedford Corn Exchange when he could. In June 1944 he was a 20-year-old radio operator on an Armoured Recovery Vehicle and, soon after, a Sherman tank.

His letter is dated, note, June 16, 1944, and begins: 'I shouldn't be surprised if mother had already told you about my trip to the Continent.' He explains that he arrived on the beach an hour after the first chaps. They had quite an exciting time.

On the first page, though, he says: 'I received your letter and *The Gramophone* yesterday.' In fact most of the letters I have mention *The Gramophone* and tend mainly to be orders for records.

From somewhere in France he asks for the 'Dance of the Seven Veils', and in another he says he has two copies of Side 3 of Ireland's *London Overture* – can Auntie Ethel change one for Sides 1 and 2?

It's nice to know that the Army of Liberation kept in touch with the latest musical goings-on. Andrew Baker via email

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Please send letters responding to articles in this issue for consideration for publication in the April issue by March 4. *Gramophone* reserves the right to edit all letters for publication.

n the April issue CLASSICAL

pioneering jazz/rock ensemble the Mahavishnu Orchestra, conducting the London Symphony Orchestra in the recording of Mahavishnu's 'Apocalypse' album. MTT's lush pastoral backcloth provided the canvas for McLaughlin's turbo-charged guitar musings and the stratospheric Grappellian electric violin of Jean-Luc Ponty, the whole

sumptuously laid out by The Beatles' producer George Martin.

Even at this seminal stage in his career, the now-familiar MTT fingerprints are in evidence: the breaking down of musical barriers, the melange of styles (witness his later San Francisco Symphony 'American Mavericks' festivals and his championing of the likes of

PHOTOGRAPHY: TERRY LOTT, PRISMA BILDAGENTUR AG/ALAMY

John Adams, Mason Bates, Henry Brant and many others) and the perpetual striving to broaden experiences and introduce new and challenging repertoire to his listeners.

Ultimately, what goes around comes around – his recent Mahler Project, comprising a 'magnificent anachronism' of 22 LPs, brings me full circle to 'Apocalypse', of which I still cherish my original vinyl copy.

Barry Borman
Edgware, Middx, UK

Editorial note

In our Chamber reviews (February, page 58) we printed incorrect cover art for the Rachmaninov/Shostakovich recording on the Quartz label by Boris Andrianov and Rem Urasin. We apologise for the error and are happy to include the correct image below.



OBITUARIES

Two fine pianists, two conductors, a tenor and the founder of a record label remembered...

ALDO CICCOLINI

Pianist Born August 15, 1925 Died February 1, 2015



Aldo Ciccolini, born in Naples but a French citizen since 1949, has died aged 89. As a nine-year-old he entered the Naples Conservatory,

where he studied with Paolo Denza, a pupil of Busoni. He made his debut at 16, in a concert at the Teatro San Carlo. He tied for first place (with Ventsislav Yankov) in the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud Competition in Paris in 1949, launching his career in France (in 1999 Ciccolini celebrated his half-century of performing in Paris with a concert at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées).

From 1970 to 1988 he taught at the Paris Conservatoire and numbered among

his pupils Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Artur Pizarro, Mark Bebbington and Nicholas Angelich. His repertoire centred on French music and he recorded extensively, often for EMI's French wing – music by Debussy, Ravel, Saint-Saëns, Alkan, Satie and Chabrier as well as lesser-known composers like de Sévérac and Castillon. For EMI-Pathé Marconi he also recorded the complete piano sonatas of Mozart and Beethoven (later reissued by Cascavelle): 'Imagine Friedrich Gulda's hard-hitting sonority and dry-point articulation welded to Wilhelm Kempff's clipped phrasing and intimate dimensions, and you'll get a general sense of Ciccolini's detail rather than big-picture-oriented aesthetic,' wrote Jed Distler in Gramophone of the 2007 reissue (4/07).

CLAUDE FRANK

Pianist Born December 24, 1925 Died December 27, 2014



Noted in particular for his interpretations of Beethoven, Claude Frank has died at the age of 89. Born in Nuremburg, he studied with

Artur Schnabel (both in Europe and, after fleeing the Nazis, in the US, where he settled, becoming an American citizen in 1944). He also studied the piano with Maria Curcio and, at Columbia University, composition and conducting with Paul Dessau; later he studied conducting with Serge Koussevitzky at Tanglewood.

He made his New York debut in 1947 and appeared with the NBC SO a year later. He served on the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and later at the Yale School of Music. He also taught at Duke University, the University of Kansas, the North Carolina School of the Arts and the Steans Music Institute, Ravinia. Among his many pupils were the pianists Richard Goode and Ian Hobson.

He made his UK debut in 1950 with a Wigmore Hall recital. As a performer, he played with the Boston Symphony Chamber Players and also with his wife, the pianist Lillian Kallir, and his daughter, the violinist Pamela Frank (together they recorded the Beethoven sonatas for piano and violin for MusicMasters).

Claude Frank recorded the complete Beethoven piano sonatas in the composer's anniversary year, 1970, for RCA (later reissued by Music & Arts): 'Frank was a Schnabel pupil and sounds it, not by imitation but by a rhythmically sprung approach in the faster movements, depth of feeling in the slower ones and a binding intelligence that covers all 32 masterpieces,' was Rob Cowan's verdict (A/02).

WARD SWINGLE

Singer and conductor Born September 21, 1927 Died January 19, 2015



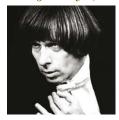
Ward Swingle, who founded The Swingle Singers, has died at the age of 87. Born in Mobile, Alabama, he studied at the Cincinnati

Conservatory of Music. He then travelled on a Fulbright Scholarship to France, where he studied the piano with Walter Gieseking and started singing with Les Double Six. He then founded his own group in 1962, initially performing scat versions of Bach. Early albums of The Swingles' Bach were hugely successful, winning them a host of Grammy Awards. Luciano Berio wrote his *Sinfonia* in 1968 with The Swingle Singers' sonority in mind and then made the premiere recording, for CBS, with the ensemble and the New York Philharmonic (12/69).

When Swingle moved to England he founded a new group known variously as the New Swingle Singers or Swingle II. Their unique sonority and close-harmony singing proved very popular and they can be heard on numerous films and TV shows. Swingle himself pursued many guest-conducting engagements, gave singing workshops and wrote an autobiography, *Swingle Singing*, in 1997.

ISRAEL YINON

Conductor Born January 11, 1956 Died January 29, 2015



Israel Yinon died while conducting Richard Strauss's *An Alpine Symphony* in Lucerne. He collapsed suddenly during the concert and could not be

resuscitated; he was 59.

Yinon was born in Israel and studied with Noam Sheriff and Mendi Rodan. As a conductor he was devoted to exploring little-performed repertoire, particularly of composers whose musical voice was silenced by the Nazis.

Yinon also made several recommendable recordings for CPO of works by Paul Ben-Haim, Josef Tal, Tilo Medek, Rudolph Simonsen, Eduard Erdmann and Franco Alfano.

WALDEMAR KMENTT

Tenor Born February 2, 1929 Died January 21, 2015



The Austrian tenor Waldemar Kmentt has died; he was 85. Born in Vienna, he studied at the city's Music Academy. He made his debut in 1950

singing the tenor part in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (one he would later record in Karajan's classic 1962 cycle for DG as well as on Klemperer's 1957 HMV recording, and the live Testament recording from the same time). In 1951 he made his stage debut at the Vienna State Opera as the Prince in Prokofiev's The Love for Three Oranges. He sang many of the Mozart lyric tenor roles, including Ferrando, Tamino, Don Ottavio and Idamante, as well as Idomeneo. He made his Salzburg Festival debut in 1955 in Pfitzner's Palestrina. In 1968 he appeared as Walther von Stolzing in the Bayreuth Festival production, conducted by Karl Böhm, of Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg (now available on Orfeo).

While he focused on the German repertoire, he did occasionally sing in Italian. Late in his life he appeared in a number of character roles including Monsieur Triquet in *Eugene Onegin*, Altoum in *Turandot* and the Innkeeper in *Der Rosenkavalier*. He also taught at his alma mater, the Vienna Music Academy.

On record he can be heard on both the Moralt and Solti *Salome* recordings

(as Narraboth) and on Solti's Tristan und Isolde (as the Young Sailor). He recorded a number of operettas including The Merry Widow, Giuditta, Die Fledermaus, Der Graf von Luxembourg and Der Zarewitsch. He was the tenor soloist in a 1967 Vienna SO recording of Mahler's Das Lied von der Erde, when Carlos Kleiber stepped in for an ailing Josef Krips. He can also be heard, more happily, in a live recording of the work from the 1959 Salzburg Festival with the Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Rafael Kubelík (Orfeo). In 2009 Orfeo issued a collection of Kmentt's performances given at the Vienna State Opera between 1955 and 1996.

Of a solo Schubert disc he recorded for Philips, and which *Gramophone* reviewed in September 1960, Andrew Porter wrote: 'His voice is not distinctive in any easily describable way, but it is of most agreeable quality, evenly and easily produced, clean in focus, and sufficiently varied in timbre for him to be able to characterise (without exaggeration) the four voices involved in 'Der Erlkönig'. These are four well-studied, well-realised interpretations.'

DAVID JOSEFOWITZ

Conductor and record label founder Born December 25, 1918 Died January 10, 2015

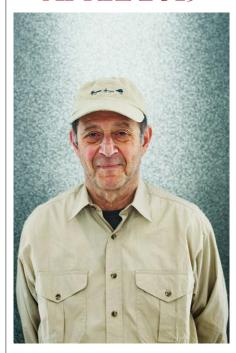


David Josefowitz started his professional career in the US as a chemist with a special interest in plastics. This led to experimentation

with a new vinyl and this, in turn, led to the creation, in 1948, in collaboration with his brother Sam, of the Concert Hall Record Society. Josefowitz produced the recordings, which engaged soloists of the calibre of David Oistrakh, pianists Lili Kraus, Vlado Perlemuter, Philippe Entremont and Menahem Pressler, and conductors Pierre Monteux, Paul Kletzki, Josef Krips, Carl Schuricht and Walter Goehr. Because they were cut directly from the master, each album was limited to 2000 copies.

In 1980 Josefowitz moved to London and founded the London Soloists Chamber Orchestra, which engaged many of London's leading orchestral players. A great supporter of young musicians, Josefowitz was a major donor to the Royal Academy of Music in London, whose Recital Hall bears his name in gratitude.

NEXT MONTH APRIL 2015



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The best Così

Mike Ashman surveys the many available recordings of the Mozart/da Ponte comic opera Così fan tutte and selects his favourite

Summer festivals

Your guide to the best classical music festivals in the UK, Europe and North America – plus, why some festivals are doubling up as hugely successful recording venues

GRAMOPHONE

ON SALE MARCH 27

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Various Cpsrs French Op Ballet Music & Entr'actes. LSO/Bonynge. B © ELQ480 8480 Various Cpsrs Music of the Monarchs. Various artists. © ④ © ELQ482 0176	HARMONIA MUNDI Cavalieri Rappresentatione di anima et di corpo. Sols/Conc Vocale/AAM Berlin/Jacobs. M ② HMC90 2200/01 Chopin 1846: Last Year at Nohant. Bertrand/Amoyel. F HMC90 2199	Gottschalk Festival (r1975). Various artists. MYRIOS Prokofiev Pf Conc No 2 Tchaikovsky Pf Conc No 1. Gerstein/ DSO Berlin/Gaffigan. © ® MYR016
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The Emerson, Lake & Palmer keyboardist on learning the piano, discovering the organ, and the role of classical music in his work

Assembly Hall where an orchestra played a variety of things that they thought would appeal to 10-year-olds, such as Grieg's *Peer Gynt* Suite. I can still remember the themes. One of the first things I attempted to do with my band The Nice was one of Grieg's pieces and it worked wonderfully well. It was a good start.

My father had an accordion, which I was too young to hold up – I couldn't squeeze the notes out of it. Then we moved house – a fine instrument (an upright piano) was hauled in and my dad played that. I started music lessons at the age of eight. I just felt, 'Oh, I want to do that'. You have to go through Beethoven's Für Elise, through the Mozart sonatas. Then I learned jazz chord progressions through a number of postal courses. You basically learnt by listening to records.

Where did the love of organ come from? Because I'd played so many lousy pianos! They were all out of tune, with cigarette burns on them, and they were horrible. The keyboardist Brian Auger and I had both encountered the same difficulty – how could we sound like Jimmy Smith? I had a Hammond L-100, and then suddenly Brian got to know that Jimmy played the Hammond B-3, so what did I do? I saved up my money and went down to the Portsmouth organ centre, and I remember my father paid the deposit because, as he said, 'Well, that's the instrument for you'. Brian's upbringing was pretty much the same as mine. You couldn't buy a Blue Note record, you had to order it, which took two weeks, but you wanted to hear the real thing. As it ended up, Brian played his style of funky jazz and I went on to play funky classical music. But all the way through, from the '60s, we've admired each other for different reasons.

I had a little jazz trio, and we'd play dinner and dance music. At the beginning you were allowed to play the standards of the time: you'd play the *One Note Samba* for example – Stan Getz was very popular so you'd learn the chords for that. Then later in the evening, they'd say, 'OK guys, play what you want'. So I'd improvise and experiment by incorporating something that I'd found in Bach – maybe the Toccata and Fugue in D minor or something – then we'd go back into the jazz. And a lot of people would come up to me at the end and say, 'Wow, that was cool, what did you play in the middle? You should play more of that.'

I remember once walking down the Embankment past the Royal Festival Hall with my fiancée, and I saw the London Philharmonic were playing. I said, 'Do you want to go and see a concert?' She said she'd never been to one, so I said,



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There are moments in the St Matthew Passion, as in the Brandenburg Concertos, which really get to me.

'Right, let's do it, there's always a first time'. I got very good balcony seats – we looked down at this fantastic orchestra and they started off with Vaughan Williams's *The Wasps* Overture. The next piece was *Pictures at an Exhibition* – and I thought it was a great bunch of tunes. So the next day I went down to a publisher who knew me and asked for a copy of the orchestral version of *Pictures at an Exhibition*. He asked, 'Why do you want the whole orchestration?' I explained that I wanted to turn it into a piano piece. He replied, 'You do realise that, in its original form, it is actually a piano piece? We have a copy of it here.' And I said, 'Great – that's going to save me a job'. So I bought it and took it round to Greg [Lake, of ELP] who had a piano. It took us all about three or four days to learn it.

I had my first Moog synthesiser shipped to me by Dr Robert Moog himself, with minimal instructions. It looked awesome − all the lights were twinkling − so I thought: this has real stage presence. And it still does. And I still play it. I'm very proud that Bob Moog was with me at the very beginning. **ઉ**

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